Pāli Canon

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Standard edition of the Thai Pali Canon

Part of *a series* on

Theravāda Buddhism

The **Pāli Canon** is the standard collection of scriptures in the Theravada Buddhist tradition, as preserved in the Pāli language.[1] It is the most complete extant early Buddhist canon.[2][3] It derives mainly from the Tamrashatiya school.[4]

During the First Buddhist Council, thirty years after the parinibbana of Gautama Buddha in Rajgir, Ananda recited the Sutta Pitaka, and Upali recited the Vinaya Pitaka. The Arhats present accepted the recitations and henceforth the teachings were preserved orally by the Sangha. The Tipitaka that was transmitted to Sri Lanka during the reign of King Asoka were initially preserved orally and were later written down during the Fourth Buddhist Council in 29 BCE, approximately 454 years after the death of Gautama Buddha.[a][6] Textual fragments of similar teachings have been found in the agama of other major Buddhist schools in India. They were however written down in various Prakrits other than Pali as well as Sanskrit. Some of those were later translated into Chinese (earliest dating to the late 4th century CE). The surviving Sri Lankan version is the most complete,[7] but one that was extensively redacted about 1,000 years after Buddha's death, in the 5th or 6th century CE.[8] The earliest textual fragments of canonical Pali were found in the Pyu city-states in Burma dating only to the mid 5th to mid 6th century CE.[9]

The Pāli Canon falls into three general categories, called *pitaka* (from Pali *piṭaka*, meaning "basket", referring to the receptacles in which the palm-leaf manuscripts were kept).[10] Because

of this, the canon is traditionally known as the ***Tipiṭaka*** ("three baskets"). The three pitakas are as follows:

1. Vinaya Piṭaka ("Discipline Basket"), dealing with rules or discipline of the sangha;[10][7]
2. Sutta Piṭaka (Sutra/Sayings Basket), discourses and sermons of Buddha, some religious poetry and is the largest basket;[10]
3. Abhidhamma Pitaka, treatises that elaborate Buddhist doctrines, particularly about mind, also called the "systematic philosophy" basket.

The Vinaya Pitaka and the Sutta Pitaka are remarkably similar to the works of the early Buddhist schools, often termed Early Buddhist Texts. The Abhidhamma Pitaka, however, is a strictly Theravada collection and has little in common with the Abhidhamma works recognized by other Buddhist schools.[11]

The Canon in the tradition[edit]

In pre-modern times the Pali Canon was not published in book form, but written on thin slices of wood (Palm-leaf manuscript or Bamboo). The leaves are kept on top of each other by thin sticks and the scripture is covered in cloth and kept in a box.

The Canon is traditionally described by the Theravada as the Word of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*), though this is not intended in a literal sense, since it includes teachings by disciples.[12]

The traditional Theravādin (Mahavihārin) interpretation of the Pali Canon is given in a series of commentaries covering nearly the whole Canon, compiled by Buddhaghosa (fl. 4th–5th century CE) and later monks, mainly on the basis of earlier materials now lost. Subcommentaries have been written afterward, commenting further on the Canon and its commentaries. The traditional Theravādin interpretation is summarized in Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga.[13]

An official view is given by a spokesman for the Buddha Sasana Council of Burma:[14] the Canon contains everything needed to show the path to nirvāna; the commentaries and subcommentaries sometimes include much speculative matter, but are faithful to its teachings and often give very illuminating illustrations. In Sri Lanka and Thailand, "official" Buddhism has in large part adopted the interpretations of Western scholars.[15]

Although the Canon has existed in written form for two millennia, its earlier oral nature has not been forgotten in actual Buddhist practice within the tradition: memorization and recitation remain common. Among frequently recited texts are the Paritta. Even lay people usually know at least a few short texts by heart and recite them regularly; this is considered a form of meditation, at least if one understands the meaning. Monks are of course expected to know quite a bit more (see Dhammapada below for an example). A Burmese monk named Vicittasara even learned the entire Canon by heart for the Sixth Council (again according to the usual Theravada numbering).[16][17]

The relation of the scriptures to Buddhism as it actually exists among ordinary monks and lay people is, as with other major religious traditions, problematic: the evidence suggests that only parts of the Canon ever enjoyed wide currency, and that non-canonical works were sometimes very much more widely used; the details varied from place to place.[18] Rupert Gethin suggests that the whole of Buddhist history may be regarded as a working out of the implications of the early scriptures.[19]

Origins[edit]

According to a late part of the Pali Canon, the Buddha taught the three pitakas.[20] It is traditionally believed by Theravadins that most of the Pali Canon originated from the Buddha and his immediate disciples. According to the scriptures, a council was held shortly after the Buddha's passing to collect and preserve his teachings. The Theravada tradition states that it was recited orally from the 5th century BCE to the first century BCE, when it was written down.[21] The memorization was enforced by regular communal recitations. The tradition holds that only a few later additions were made. The Theravādin pitakas were first written down in Sri Lanka in the Alu Viharaya Temple no earlier than 29–17 BCE.[22]

The geographic setting of identifiable texts within the Canon generally corresponds to locations in the Ganges region of northeastern India, including the kingdoms of Kosala, Kasi, Vajji, and Magadha.[23] While Theravada tradition has generally regarded Pali as being synonymous with the language of the kingdom of Magadhi as spoken by the Buddha, linguists have identified Pali as being more closely related to other prakrit languages of western India, and found substantial incompatibilities with the few preserved examples of Magadhi and other north-eastern prakrit languages.[24] Linguistic research suggests that the teachings of the Buddha may have been recorded in an eastern India language originally, but were transposed into the west Indian precursor of Pali sometime before the Asokan era.[23]

Much of the material in the Canon is not specifically Theravādin, but is instead the collection of teachings that this school preserved from the early, non-sectarian body of teachings. According to Peter Harvey, it contains material which is at odds with later Theravādin orthodoxy. He states that "the Theravādins, then, may have *added* texts to the Canon for some time, but they do not appear to have tampered with what they already had from an earlier period."[25] A variety of factors suggest that the early Sri Lankan Buddhists regarded canonical literature as such and transmitted it conservatively.[26]

Theravada tradition generally treats the Canon as a whole as originating with the Buddha and his immediate disciples (with the exception certain, generally Abhidhamma texts, that explicitly refer to events long after his death). Scholars differ in their views regarding the ultimate origin of the Pali Canon, but generally believe that the Canon includes several strata of relatively early and late texts, but with little consensus regarding the relative dating of different sections of the Canon or which texts belong to which era.[23]

Authorship[edit]

Authorship according to Theravadins[edit]

Prayudh Payutto argues that the Pali Canon represents the teachings of the Buddha essentially unchanged apart from minor modifications. He argues that it also incorporates teachings that precede the Buddha, and that the later teachings were memorized by the Buddha's followers while he was still alive. His thesis is based on study of the processes of the first great council, and the methods for memorization used by the monks, which started during the Buddha's lifetime. It's also based on the capability of a few monks, to this day, to memorize the entire canon.[27]

Bhikkhu Sujato and Bhikkhu Brahmali argue that it is likely that much of the Pali Canon dates back to the time period of the Buddha. They base this on many lines of evidence including the technology described in the canon (apart from the obviously later texts), which matches the technology of his day which was in rapid development, that it doesn't include back written prophecies of the great Buddhist ruler King Ashoka (which Mahayana texts often do) suggesting that it predates his time, that in its descriptions of the political geography it presents India at the

time of Buddha, which changed soon after his death, that it has no mention of places in South India, which would have been well known to Indians not long after Buddha's death and various other lines of evidence dating the material back to his time.[28]

Authorship according to academic scholars[edit]

The views of scholars concerning the authorship of the Pali Canon can be grouped into three categories:[*citation needed*]

1. Attribution to the Buddha himself and his early followers
2. Attribution to the period of pre-sectarian Buddhism
3. Agnosticism

Scholars have both supported and opposed the various existing views.

Views concerning authorship of the Buddha himself[edit]

Several scholars of early Buddhism argue that the nucleus of the Buddhist teachings in the Pali Canon may derive from Gautama Buddha himself, but that part of it also was developed after the Buddha by his early followers. Richard Gombrich says that the main preachings of the Buddha (as in the Vinaya and Sutta Pitaka) are coherent and cogent, and must be the work of a single person: the Buddha himself, not a committee of followers after his death.[b][30]

Other scholars are more cautious, and attribute part of the Pali canon to the Buddha's early followers. Peter Harvey[31] also states that "much" of the Pali Canon must derive from the Buddha's teaching, but also states that "parts of the Pali Canon clearly originated after the time of the Buddha."[c] A.K. Warder has stated that there is no evidence to suggest that the shared teaching of the early schools was formulated by anyone else than the Buddha and his immediate followers.[d] J.W. de Jong has said it would be "hypocritical" to assert that we can say nothing about the teachings of earliest Buddhism, arguing that "the basic ideas of Buddhism found in the canonical writings could very well have been proclaimed by him [the Buddha], transmitted and developed by his disciples and, finally, codified in fixed formulas."[33] Alex Wynne has said that some texts in the Pali Canon may go back to the very beginning of Buddhism, which perhaps include the substance of the Buddha's teaching, and in some cases, maybe even his words.[e]. He suggests that the canon was composed early on soon after Buddha's paranirvana, but after a period of free improvisation, and then the core teachings were preserved nearly verbatim by memory.[34] Hajime Nakamura writes that while nothing can be definitively attributed to Gautama as a historical figure, some sayings or phrases must derive from him.[35]

Views concerning authorship in the period of pre-sectarian Buddhism[edit]

Most scholars do agree that there was a rough body of sacred literature that a relatively early community maintained and transmitted.[36][f]

Much of the Pali Canon is found also in the scriptures of other early schools of Buddhism, parts of whose versions are preserved, mainly in Chinese. Many scholars have argued that this shared material can be attributed to the period of Pre-sectarian Buddhism.[*citation needed*] This is the period before the early schools separated in about the fourth or third century BCE.

Views concerning agnosticism[edit]

Some scholars see the Pali Canon as expanding and changing from an unknown nucleus.[37] Arguments given for an agnostic attitude include that the evidence for the Buddha's teachings dates from (long) after his death.

Some scholars of later Indian Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism say that little or nothing goes back to the Buddha. Ronald Davidson[38] has little confidence that much, if any, of surviving Buddhist scripture is actually the word of the historical Buddha.[36] Geoffrey Samuel[39] says the Pali Canon largely derives from the work of Buddhaghosa and his colleagues in the 5th century CE.[40] Gregory Schopen argues[41] that it is not until the 5th to 6th centuries CE that we can know anything definite about the contents of the Canon. This position was criticized by A. Wynne.[5]

Authorship of the Abhidhamma Pitaka[edit]

Western scholarship suggests that the Abhidhamma Pitaka was likely began to be composed around 300 BCE, but may have drawn on an earlier tradition of lists and rubrics known as 'matrika'.[10][42] Traditional accounts include it among the texts recited at the First Buddhist Council and attribute differences in form and style to its composition by Sariputra.[43][44]

The earliest books of the Pali Canon[edit]

Different positions have been taken on what are the earliest books of the Canon. The majority of Western scholars consider the earliest identifiable stratum to be mainly prose works,[45] the Vinaya (excluding the Parivāra)[46] and the first four nikāyas of the Sutta Pitaka,[47][48] and perhaps also some short verse works[49] such as the Suttanipata.[46] However, some scholars, particularly in Japan, maintain that the Suttanipāta is the earliest of all Buddhist scriptures, followed by the Itivuttaka and Udāna.[50] However, some of the developments in teachings may only reflect changes in teaching that the Buddha himself adopted, during the 45 years that the Buddha was teaching.[g]

Scholars generally agree that the early books include some later additions.[51] Aspects of these late additions are or may be from a much earlier period.[52][53][54] Other aspects of the Pali Canon, such as the information about society and South Asian history, are in doubt because the Pali Canon was extensively redacted in the 5th- or 6th-century CE, nearly a thousand years after the death of the Buddha.[8] Further, this redacted Pali Canon of Sri Lanka itself mentions that the compilation had previously been redacted towards the end of 1st-century BCE. According to the Early Buddhism scholar Lars Fogelin, the Pali Canon of Sri Lanka is a modified Canon and "there is no good reason to assume that Sri Lankan Buddhism resembles Early Buddhism in the mainland, and there are numerous reasons to argue that it does not."[55]

One of the edicts of Ashoka, the 'Calcutta-Bairat edict', lists several works from the canon which he considers advantageous. According to Alexander Wynne:

The general consensus seems to be that what Asoka calls Munigatha correspond to the Munisutta (Sn 207-21), Moneyasute is probably the second half of the Nalakasutta (Sn 699-723), and Upatisapasine may correspond to the Sariputtasutta (Sn 955-975). The identification of most of the other titles is less certain, but Schmithausen, following Oldenberg before him, identifies what Asoka calls the Laghulovada with part of a prose text in the Majjhima Nikaya, the Ambalatthika-Rahulovada Sutta (M no.61).[56]

This seems to be evidence which indicates that some of these texts were already fixed by the time of the reign of Ashoka (304–232 BCE), which means that some of the texts carried by the Buddhist missionaries at this time might also have been fixed.[56]

According to the Sri Lankan Mahavamsa, the Pali Canon was written down in the reign of King Vattagāmini (*Vaṭṭagāmiṇi*) (1st century BCE) in Sri Lanka, at the Fourth Buddhist council. Most scholars hold that little if anything was added to the Canon after this,[57][58][59] though Schopen questions this.

Texts[edit]

Manuscripts[edit]

Burmese-Pali manuscript copy of the Buddhist text Mahaniddesa, showing three different types of Burmese script, (top) medium square, (centre) round and (bottom) outline round in red lacquer from the inside of one of the gilded covers

The climate of Theravāda countries is not conducive to the survival of manuscripts. Apart from brief quotations in inscriptions and a two-page fragment from the eighth or ninth century found in Nepal, the oldest manuscripts known are from late in the fifteenth century,[60] and there is not very much from before the eighteenth.[61]

Printed editions and digitized editions[edit]

The first complete printed edition of the Canon was published in Burma in 1900, in 38 volumes.[62] The following editions of the Pali text of the Canon are readily available in the West:

1. Pali Text Society edition, 1877–1927 (a few volumes subsequently replaced by new editions), 57 volumes including indexes.[61]

The Pali scriptures and some Pali commentaries were digitized as an MS-DOS/extended ASCII compatible database through cooperation between the Dhammakaya Foundation and the Pali Text Society in 1996 as *PALITEXT version 1.0: CD-ROM Database of the Entire Buddhist Pali Canon* ISBN 978-974-8235-87-5.[63]

2. Thai edition, 1925–28, 45 volumes; more accurate than the PTS edition, but with fewer variant readings;[64]

BUDSIR on Internet[65] free with login; and electronic transcript by BUDSIR: Buddhist scriptures information retrieval,[66] CD-ROM and online, both requiring payment.

3. Sixth Council edition, Rangoon, 1954–56, 40 volumes; more accurate than the Thai edition, but with fewer variant readings;[67]

electronic transcript by Vipāssana Research Institute available online[68] in searchable database free of charge, or on CD-ROM (p&p only) from the institute.[69]

Another transcript of this edition, produced under the patronage of the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, World Tipitaka Edition, 2005, 40 volumes, published by the Dhamma Society Fund,[70] claims to include the full extent of changes made at the Sixth Council, and therefore reflect the results of the council more accurately than some existing Sixth Council editions. Available for viewing online (registration required) at Tipiṭaka Quotation WebService.[71]

4. Sinhalese (Buddha Jayanti) edition, 1957–?1993, 58 volumes including parallel Sinhalese translations, searchable, free of charge (not yet fully proofread.) Available at Journal of Buddhist Ethics.[72]
5. Sinhalese (Buddha Jayanti). Image files in Sinhala script. The only accurate version of the Sri Lankan text available, in individual page images. Cannot be searched though.[73]

Transcript in BudhgayaNews Pali Canon.[74] In this version it is easy to search for individual words across all 16,000+ pages at once and view the contexts in which they appear.

No one edition has all the best readings, and scholars must compare different editions.[75]

The Complete Collection of Chinese Pattra Scripture as preserved by the Dai people.[76]

Translations[edit]

Pali Canon in English Translation, 1895-, in progress, 43 volumes so far, Pali Text Society, Bristol; for details of these and other translations of individual books see the separate articles. In 1994, the then President of the Pali Text Society stated that most of these translations were unsatisfactory.[77] Another former President said in 2003 that most of the translations were done very badly.[29] The style of many translations from the Canon has been criticized[78] as "Buddhist Hybrid English", a term invented by Paul Griffiths for translations from Sanskrit. He describes it as "deplorable", "comprehensible only to the initiate, written by and for Buddhologists".[79]

Selections: see List of Pali Canon anthologies.

A translation by Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi of the Majjhima Nikaya was published by Wisdom Publications in 1995.

Translations by Bhikkhu Bodhi of the Samyutta Nikaya and the Anguttara Nikaya were published by Wisdom Publications in 2003 and 2012, respectively.

In 2018, new translations of the entirety of the five Nikayas were made freely available on the website suttacentral by the Australian Bhikkhu Sujato, the translations were also released into the Public Domain.

A Japanese translation of the Canon, edited by Takakusu Junjiro, was published in 65 volumes from 1935 to 1941 as The Mahātripiṭaka of the Southern Tradition (南伝大蔵経 *Nanden daizōkyō*).

A Chinese translation of the above-mentioned Japanese translation was undertaken between 1990-1998 and thereafter printed under the patronage of Kaoshiung's Yuan Heng Temple.[80]

Contents of the Canon[edit]

As noted above, the Canon consists of three pitakas.

- Vinaya Pitaka (*vinayapiṭaka*)
- Sutta Pitaka or Suttanta Pitaka
- Abhidhamma Pitaka

Details are given below. For more complete information, see standard references on Pali literature.[81][82]

Vinaya Pitaka[edit]

The first category, the *Vinaya Pitaka*, is mostly concerned with the rules of the *sangha*, both monks and nuns. The rules are preceded by stories telling how the Buddha came to lay them down, and followed by explanations and analysis. According to the stories, the rules were devised on an ad hoc basis as the Buddha encountered various behavioral problems or disputes among his followers. This pitaka can be divided into three parts:

Suttavibhanga (*-vibhaṅga*) Commentary on the Patimokkha, a basic code of rules for monks and nuns that is not as such included in the Canon. The monks' rules are dealt with first, followed by those of the nuns' rules not already covered.

Khandhaka Other rules grouped by topic in 22 chapters.

Parivara (parivāra) Analysis of the rules from various points of view.

Sutta Pitaka[edit]

The second category is the *Sutta Pitaka* (literally "basket of threads", or of "the well spoken"; Sanskrit: *Sutra Pitaka*, following the former meaning) which consists primarily of accounts of the Buddha's teachings. The Sutta Pitaka has five subdivisions, or nikayas:

Digha Nikaya (dīghanikāya) 34 long discourses.[83] Joy Manné argues[84] that this book was particularly intended to make converts, with its high proportion of debates and devotional material.

Majjhima Nikaya 152 medium-length discourses.[83] Manné argues[84] that this book was particularly intended to give a solid grounding in the teaching to converts, with a high proportion of sermons and consultations.

Samyutta Nikaya (*saṃyutta-*) Thousands of short discourses in fifty-odd groups by subject, person etc. Bhikkhu Bodhi, in his translation, says this nikaya has the most detailed explanations of doctrine.

Anguttara Nikaya (*aṅguttara-*) Thousands of short discourses arranged numerically from ones to elevens. It contains more elementary teaching for ordinary people than the preceding three.

Khuddaka Nikaya A miscellaneous collection of works in prose or verse.

Abhidhamma Pitaka[edit]

The third category, the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* (literally "beyond the dhamma", "higher dhamma" or "special dhamma", Sanskrit: *Abhidharma Pitaka*), is a collection of texts which give a scholastic explanation of Buddhist doctrines particularly about mind, and sometimes referred to as the "systematic philosophy" basket.[10][42] There are seven books in the Abhidhamma Pitaka:

Dhammasangani (*-saṅgaṇi* or *-saṅgaṇī*) Enumeration, definition and classification of dhammas

Vibhanga (*vibhaṅga*) Analysis of 18 topics by various methods, including those of the Dhammasangani

Dhatukatha (dhātukathā) Deals with interrelations between ideas from the previous two books

Puggalapannatti (-paññatti) Explanations of types of person, arranged numerically in lists from ones to tens

Kathavatthu (kathā-) Over 200 debates on points of doctrine

Yamaka Applies to 10 topics a procedure involving converse questions (e.g. Is X Y? Is Y X?)

Patthana (*paṭṭhāna*) Analysis of 24 types of condition[85]

The traditional position is that *abhidhamma* refers to the absolute teaching, while the suttas are adapted to the hearer. Most scholars describe the abhidhamma as an attempt to systematize the teachings of the suttas:[85][86] Cousins says that where the suttas think in terms of sequences or processes the abhidhamma thinks in terms of specific events or occasions.[87]

Use of Brahmanical devices[edit]

The Pali Canon uses many Brahmanical terminology and concepts. For example, in Samyutta Nikaya 111, Majjhima Nikaya 92 and Vinaya i 246 of the Pali Canon, the Buddha praises the Agnihotra as the foremost sacrifice and the Gayatri mantra as the foremost meter:

aggihuttamukhā yaññā sāvittī chandaso mukham.

Sacrifices have the agnihotra as foremost; of meter the foremost is the Sāvitrī.[88]

Comparison with other Buddhist canons[edit]

See also: Āgama (Buddhism)

The other two main Buddhist canons in use in the present day are the Chinese Buddhist Canon and the Tibetan Kangyur.

The standard modern edition of the Chinese Buddhist Canon is the Taishō Revised Tripitaka, with a hundred major divisions, totaling over 80,000 pages. This includes Vinayas for the Dharmaguptaka, Sarvāstivāda, Mahīśāsaka, and Mahāsaṃghika schools. It also includes the four major Āgamas, which are analogous to the Nikayas of the Pali Canon. Namely, they are the Saṃyukta Āgama, Madhyama Āgama, Dīrgha Āgama, and Ekottara Āgama. Also included are the Dhammapada, the Udāna, the Itivuttaka, and Milindapanha. There are also additional texts, including early histories, that are preserved from the early Buddhist schools but not found in Pali. The canon contains voluminous works of Abhidharma, especially from the Sarvāstivāda school. The Indian works preserved in the Chinese Canon were translated mostly from Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, Classical Sanskrit, or from regional Prakrits. The Chinese generally referred to these simply as "Sanskrit" (Ch. 梵語, Fànyǔ). The first woodblock printing of the entire Chinese Buddhist Canon was done during the Song dynasty by imperial order in China in CE 971; the earliest dated printed Buddhist sutra was the Diamond Sutra printed in CE 868 (printed by an upāsaka for free distribution); although printing of individual Buddhist sutras and related materials may have started as early as the 7th century CE.[89]

The Tibetan Kangyur comprises about a hundred volumes and includes versions of the Vinaya Pitaka, the Dhammapada (under the title *Udanavarga*) and parts of some other books. Due to the later compilation, it contains comparatively fewer early Buddhist texts than the Pali and Chinese canons.

The Chinese and Tibetan canons are not translations of the Pali and differ from it to varying extents, but contain some recognizably similar early works. However, the Abhidharma books are fundamentally different works from the Pali Abhidhamma Pitaka. The Chinese and Tibetan canons also consist of Mahāyāna sūtras and Vajrayāna tantras, which have few parallels in the Pali Canon.[h]

Notes[edit]

^ If the language of the Pāli canon is north Indian in origin, and without substantial Sinhalese additions, it is likely that the canon was composed somewhere in north India before its introduction to Sri Lanka.[5]

^ "I am saying that there was a person called the Buddha, that the preachings probably go back to him individually... that we can learn more about what he meant, and that he was saying some very precise things."[29]

^ "While parts of the Pali Canon clearly originated after the time of the Buddha, much must derive from his teaching."[2]

^ "there is no evidence to suggest that it was formulated by anyone else than the Buddha and his immediate followers." [32]

^ "If some of the material is so old, it might be possible to establish what texts go back to the very beginning of Buddhism, texts which perhaps include the substance of the Buddha's teaching, and in some cases, maybe even his words", [5]

^ Ronald Davidson states, "most scholars agree that there was a rough body of sacred literature (disputed) that a relatively early community (disputed) maintained and transmitted."[36]

^ "as the Buddha taught for 45 years, some signs of development in teachings may only reflect changes during this period."[2]

^ Most notably, a version of the Atanatiya Sutta (from the Digha Nikaya) is included in the tantra (Mikkyo, rgyud) divisions of the Taisho and of the Cone, Derge, Lhasa, Lithang, Narthang and Peking (Qianlong) editions of the Kangyur.[90]

Religious text

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"Sacred texts" redirects here. For the web site, see Internet Sacred Text Archive.

The Greek Old Testament: A page from *Codex Vaticanus*

Religious texts are texts related to a religious tradition. They differ from literary texts by being a compilation or discussion of beliefs, mythologies, ritual practices, commandments or laws, ethical conduct, spiritual aspirations and by creating or fostering a religious community.[1][2][3] The relative authority of religious texts develops over time and is derived from the ratification, enforcement, and its use across generations. Some religious texts are accepted or categorized as canonical, some non-canonical, and others extracanonical, semi-canonical, deutero-canonical, pre-canonical or post-canonical.[4]

A **scripture** is a subset of religious texts considered to "especially authoritative",[5][6] revered and "holy writ",[7] "sacred, canonical", or of "supreme authority, special status" to a religious community.[8][9] The terms 'sacred text' and 'religious text' are not necessarily interchangeable in that some religious texts are believed to be sacred because of the belief in some theistic religions such as the Abrahamic religions that the text is divinely or supernaturally revealed or divinely inspired, or in non-theistic religions such as some Indian religions they are considered to be the central tenets of their eternal *Dharma*. Many religious texts, in contrast, are simply narratives or discussions pertaining to the general themes, interpretations, practices, or important figures of the specific religion. In some religions (Islam), the scripture of supreme authority is well established (Quran). In others (Christianity), the canonical texts include a particular text (Bible) but is "an unsettled question", according to Eugene Nida. In yet others (Hinduism, Buddhism), there "has never been a definitive canon".[10][11] While the term *Scripture* is derived from the Latin *scriptura*, meaning "writing", most sacred scriptures of the world's major religions were originally a part of their oral tradition, and were "passed down through memorization from generation to generation until they were finally committed to writing", according to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.[7][12][13]

Religious texts also serve a ceremonial and liturgical role, particularly in relation to sacred time, the liturgical year, the divine efficacy and subsequent holy service; in a more general sense, its performance.[*citation needed*]

Etymology and nomenclature[edit]

According to Peter Beal, the term *scripture* – derived from *"scriptura"* (Latin) – meant "writings [manuscripts] in general" prior to the medieval era, then became "reserved to denote the texts of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible".[14] Beyond Christianity, according to the *Oxford World Encyclopedia*, the term "scripture" has referred to a text accepted to contain the "sacred writings of a religion",[15] while *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* states it refers to a text "having [religious] authority and often collected into an accepted canon".[16]

Some religious texts are categorized as canonical, some non-canonical, and others extracanonical, semi-canonical, deutero-canonical, pre-canonical or post-canonical.[4] The term "canon" is derived from the Greek word *"κανών"*, "a cane used as a measuring instrument". It connotes the sense of "measure, standard, norm, rule". In the modern usage, a religious canon refers to a "catalogue of sacred scriptures" that is broadly accepted to "contain and agree with the rule or canon of a particular faith", states Juan Widow.[17] The related terms such as "non-canonical", "extracanonical", "deuterocanonical" and others presume and are derived from "canon". These derived terms differentiate a corpus of religious texts from the "canonical" literature. At its root, this differentiation reflects the sects and conflicts that developed and branched off over time, the competitive "acceptance" of a common minimum over time and the "rejection" of interpretations, beliefs, rules or practices by one group of another related socio-religious group.[18] The earliest reference to the term "canon" in the context of "a collection of sacred Scripture" is traceable to the 4th-century CE. The early references, such as the Synod of Laodicea mention both the terms "canonical" and "non-canonical" in the context of religious texts.[19]

History of religious texts[edit]

See also: History of religions, Timeline of religion, and History of writing

One of the oldest known religious texts is the Kesh Temple Hymn of Ancient Sumer,[20][21] a set of inscribed clay tablets which scholars typically date around 2600 BCE.[22] The Epic of Gilgamesh from Sumer, although only considered by some scholars as a religious text, has origins as early as 2150 BCE,[23] and stands as one of the earliest literary works that includes various mythological figures and themes of interaction with the divine.[24] The ''Rig Veda'' – a scripture of Hinduism – is dated to between 1500–1200 BCE. It is one of the oldest known complete religious texts that has survived into the modern age.[25]

There are many possible dates given to the first writings which can be connected to Talmudic and Biblical traditions, the earliest of which is found in scribal documentation of the 8th century BCE,[26] followed by administrative documentation from temples of the 5th and 6th centuries BCE,[27] with another common date being the 2nd century BCE.[27] Although a significant text in the history of religious text because of its widespread use among religious denominations and its continued use throughout history, the texts of the Abrahamic traditions are a good example of the lack of certainty surrounding dates and definitions of religious texts.

High rates of mass production and distribution of religious texts did not begin until the invention of the printing press in 1440,[28] before which all religious texts were hand written copies, of which there were relatively limited quantities in circulation.

Sacred texts of various religions[edit]

This section **does not cite any sources**. Please help improve this section by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed.
Find sources: "Religious text" – news · newspapers · books · scholar · JSTOR *(March 2012) (Learn how and when to remove this template message)*

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It has been suggested that this section be split out into another article. (Discuss) *(May 2019)*

The following is an in-exhaustive list of links to specific religious texts which may be used for further, more in-depth study.

Bronze Age[edit]

Ancient Egyptian religion

Pyramid texts from Teti I's pyramid.

Iranian[edit]

Zoroastrianism

Yasna 28.1 (Bodleian MS J2)

The Bhagavad Gita is Lord Krishna's counsel to Arjuna on the battlefield of the Kurukshetra.

Buddhism[edit]

Ancient style of scripture used for the Pāli Canon

East Asian Mahayana

The Chinese Diamond Sutra, the oldest known dated printed book in the world, printed in the 9th year of Xiantong Era of the Tang Dynasty, or 868 CE. British Library.

Sikhism[edit]

Illuminated Guru Granth folio with Mul Mantar(basic religion mantra) with signature of Guru Gobind Singh.

Main article: Sikh scriptures

Judaism[edit]

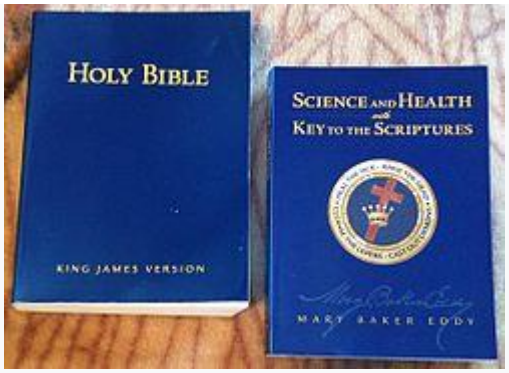
A *Sefer Torah* opened for liturgical use in a synagogue service

Christianity[edit]

Further information: Biblical canon, Christian biblical canons, and Books of the Bible

Christian Bible, 1407 handwritten copy

Christian Scientists



The Bible (left) and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (right) serve as the pastor of the Christian Science church.

Islam[edit]

Pali

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

(Redirected from Pāli)

Jump to navigationJump to search

Not to be confused with Bali language (disambiguation).

For other uses, see Pali (disambiguation).

This article or section should **specify the language of its non-English content, using {{lang}}, with an appropriate ISO 639 code.** See why. *(April 2019)*

Pali
पालि *Pāḷi*

The upper half shows a text in Sanskrit (praise of Vishnu) written in Devanagari while the lower half shows a text in Pali from a Buddhist ceremonial scripture called "Kammuwa" from Burma, probably in the Mon script.

Pali (/ˈpɑːli/ *Pāḷi*; Burmese: ပါဠိ) (Devanagari: पालि) or **Magadhan**[a] is a Middle Indo-Aryan liturgical language native to the Indian subcontinent. It is widely studied because it is the language of the *Pāli Canon* or *Tipiṭaka*, and is the sacred language of *Theravāda* Buddhism. The earliest archaeological evidence of the existence of canonical Pali comes from Pyu city-states inscriptions found in Burma dated to the mid 5th to mid 6th century CE.[4]

Origin and development[edit]

Etymology[edit]

The word Pali is used as a name for the language of the Theravada canon. The word seems to have its origins in commentarial traditions, wherein the *Pāli* (in the sense of the line of original text quoted) was distinguished from the commentary or vernacular translation that followed it in the manuscript.[3]

As such, the name of the language has caused some debate among scholars of all ages; the spelling of the name also varies, being found with both long "ā" [aː] and short "a" [a], and also with either a retroflex [l] or non-retroflex [l] "l" sound. Both the long ā and retroflex ḷ are seen in the ISO 15919/ALA-LC rendering, **Pāḷi**; however, to this day there is no single, standard spelling of the term, and all four possible spellings can be found in textbooks. R. C. Childers translates the word as "series" and states that the language "bears the epithet in consequence of the perfection of its grammatical structure".[5]

In the 19th century, the British Orientalist Robert Caesar Childers argued that the true or geographical name of the Pali language was Magadhi Prakrit, and that because *pāḷi* means "line, row, series", the early Buddhists extended the meaning of the term to mean "a series of books", so *pāḷibhāsā* means "language of the texts".[6] However, modern scholarship has regarded Pali as a mix of several Prakrit languages from around the 3rd century BCE, combined together and partially Sanskritized.[7] The closest artifacts to Pali that have been found in India are Edicts of Ashoka found at Gujarat, in the west of India, leading some scholars to associate Pali with this region of western India.[8]

Classification[edit]

There is persistent confusion as to the relation of Pāḷi to the vernacular spoken in the ancient kingdom of Magadha, which was located around modern-day Bihār. Beginning in the Theravada commentaries, Pali was identified with 'Magadhi', the language of the kingdom of Magadha, and this was taken to also be the language that the Buddha used during his life.[3] In the modern era, it has been possible to compare Pali with inscriptions known to be in Magadhi Prakrit, as well as other texts and grammars of that language.[3] While none of the existing sources specifically document pre-Ashokan Magadhi, the available sources suggest that Pali is not equatable with that language.[3]

Pali, as a Middle Indo-Aryan language, is different from Sanskrit more with regard to its dialectal base than the time of its origin. A number of its morphological and lexical features show that it is not a direct continuation of Rgvedic Vedic Sanskrit. Instead it descends from one or more dialects that were, despite many similarities, different from Ṛgvedic.[9]

However, this view is not shared by all scholars. Some, like A.C. Woolner, believe that Pali is derived from Vedic Sanskrit, but not necessarily from Classical Sanskrit.[10]

Early history[edit]

Pāli and Paiśācī[edit]

Paiśācī is a largely unattested literary language of classical India that is mentioned in Prakrit and Sanskrit grammars of antiquity. It is found grouped with the Prakrit languages, with which it shares some linguistic similarities, but was not considered a spoken language by the early grammarians because it was understood to have been purely a literary language.[11]

In works of Sanskrit poetics such as Dandin's *Kavyadarsha*, it is also known by the name of *Bhūtabhāṣā*, an epithet which can be interpreted as 'dead language' (i.e., with no surviving speakers), or *bhūta* means past and *bhāṣā* means language i.e. 'a language spoken in the past'. Evidence which lends support to this interpretation is that literature in Paiśācī is fragmentary and extremely rare but may once have been common.

The 13th-century Tibetan historian Buton Rinchen Drub wrote that the early Buddhist schools were separated by choice of sacred language: the Mahāsāṃghikas used Prākrit, the Sarvāstivādins used Sanskrit, the Sthaviravādins used Paiśācī, and the Saṃmitīya used Apabhraṃśa.[12] This observation has led some scholars to theorize connections between Pali and Paiśācī; Sten Konow concluded that it may have been an Indo-Aryan language spoken by Dravidian people in South India, and Alfred Master noted a number of similarities between surviving fragments and Pali morphology.[11][13]

Theravada Buddhism[edit]

19th century Burmese Kammavācā (confession for Buddhist monks), written in Pali on gilded palm leaf

Many Theravada sources refer to the Pali language as "Magadhan" or the "language of Magadha". This identification first appears in the commentaries, and may have been an attempt by Buddhists to associate themselves more closely with the Maurya Empire.[3]

However, only some of the Buddha's teachings were delivered in the historical territory of the kingdom of Magadhi.[3] Scholars consider it likely that he taught in several closely related dialects of Middle Indo-Aryan, which had a high degree of mutual intelligibility. There is no attested dialect of Middle Indo-Aryan with all the features of Pali. Pali has some commonalities with both the western Ashokan Edicts at Girnar in Saurashtra, and the Central-Western Prakrit found in the eastern Hathigumpha inscription.

Whatever the relationship of the Buddha's speech to Pali, the canon was eventually transcribed and preserved entirely in it, while the commentarial tradition that accompanied it (according to the information provided by Buddhaghosa) was translated into Sinhala and preserved in local languages for several generations. In Sri Lanka, Pali is thought to have entered into a period of decline ending around the 4th or 5th century (as Sanskrit rose in prominence, and simultaneously, as Buddhism's adherents became a smaller portion of the subcontinent), but ultimately survived. The work of Buddhaghosa was largely responsible for its reemergence as an important scholarly language in Buddhist thought. The *Visuddhimagga*, and the other commentaries that Buddhaghosa compiled, codified and condensed the Sinhala commentarial tradition that had been preserved and expanded in Sri Lanka since the 3rd century BCE.[*citation needed*]

Early Western views[edit]

T. W. Rhys Davids in his book *Buddhist India*,[14] and Wilhelm Geiger in his book *Pāli Literature and Language*, suggested that Pali may have originated as a lingua franca or common language of culture among people who used differing dialects in North India, used at the time of the Buddha and employed by him. Another scholar states that at that time it was "a refined and elegant vernacular of all Aryan-speaking people".[15] Modern scholarship has not arrived at a consensus on the issue; there are a variety of conflicting theories with supporters and detractors.[16] After the death of the Buddha, Pali may have evolved among Buddhists out of the language of the Buddha as a new artificial language.[17] R. C. Childers, who held to the theory that Pali was Old Magadhi, wrote: "Had Gautama never preached, it is unlikely that Magadhese would have been distinguished from the many other vernaculars of Hindustan, except perhaps by an inherent grace and strength which make it a sort of Tuscan among the Prakrits."[18]

According to K. R. Norman, it is likely that the viharas in North India had separate collections of material, preserved in the local dialect. In the early period it is likely that no degree of translation was necessary in communicating this material to other areas. Around the time of Ashoka there had been more linguistic divergence, and an attempt was made to assemble all the material. It is possible that a language quite close to the Pali of the canon emerged as a result of this process as a compromise of the various dialects in which the earliest material had been preserved, and this language functioned as a lingua franca among Eastern Buddhists in India from then on.

Following this period, the language underwent a small degree of Sanskritisation (i.e., MIA bamhana > brahmana, tta > tva in some cases).[19]

Modern scholarship[edit]

Bhikkhu Bodhi, summarizing the current state of scholarship, states that the language is "closely related to the language (or, more likely, the various regional dialects) that the Buddha himself spoke". He goes on to write:

> Scholars regard this language as a hybrid showing features of several Prakrit dialects used around the third century BCE, subjected to a partial process of Sanskritization. While the language is not identical to what Buddha himself would have spoken, it belongs to the same broad language family as those he might have used and originates from the same conceptual matrix. This language thus reflects the thought-world that the Buddha inherited from the wider Indian culture into which he was born, so that its words capture the subtle nuances of that thought-world.
>
> — *Bhikkhu Bodhi*[7]

According to A. K. Warder, the Pali language is a Prakrit language used in a region of Western India.[20] Warder associates Pali with the Indian realm (*janapada*) of Avanti, where the Sthavira nikāya was centered.[20] Following the initial split in the Buddhist community, the Sthavira nikāya became influential in Western and South India while the Mahāsāṃghika branch became influential in Central and East India.[8] Akira Hirakawa and Paul Groner also associate Pali with Western India and the Sthavira nikāya, citing the Saurashtran inscriptions, which are linguistically closest to the Pali language.[8]

Pali today[edit]

Pali died out as a literary language in mainland India in the fourteenth century but survived elsewhere until the eighteenth.[21] Today Pali is studied mainly to gain access to Buddhist scriptures, and is frequently chanted in a ritual context. The secular literature of Pali historical chronicles, medical texts, and inscriptions is also of great historical importance. The great centers of Pali learning remain in the Theravada nations of Southeast Asia: Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia. Since the 19th century, various societies for the revival of Pali studies in India have promoted awareness of the language and its literature, including the Maha Bodhi Society founded by Anagarika Dhammapala.

In Europe, the Pali Text Society has been a major force in promoting the study of Pali by Western scholars since its founding in 1881. Based in the United Kingdom, the society publishes romanized Pali editions, along with many English translations of these sources. In 1869, the first *Pali Dictionary* was published using the research of Robert Caesar Childers, one of the founding members of the Pali Text Society. It was the first Pali translated text in English and was published in 1872. Childers' dictionary later received the Volney Prize in 1876.

The Pali Text Society was founded in part to compensate for the very low level of funds allocated to Indology in late 19th-century England and the rest of the UK; incongruously, the citizens of the UK were not nearly so robust in Sanskrit and Prakrit language studies as Germany, Russia, and even Denmark. Even without the inspiration of colonial holdings such as the former British occupation of Sri Lanka and Burma, institutions such as the Danish Royal Library have built up major collections of Pali manuscripts, and major traditions of Pali studies.

Lexicon[edit]

Nearly every word in Pāḷi has cognates in the other Middle Indo-Aryan languages, the Prakrits. The relationship to Vedic Sanskrit is less direct and more complicated; the Prakrits were descended from Old Indo-Aryan vernaculars. Historically, influence between Pali and Sanskrit has been felt in both directions. The Pali language's resemblance to Sanskrit is often exaggerated by comparing it to later Sanskrit compositions – which were written centuries after Sanskrit ceased to be a living language, and are influenced by developments in Middle Indic, including the direct borrowing of a portion of the Middle Indic lexicon; whereas, a good deal of

later Pali technical terminology has been borrowed from the vocabulary of equivalent disciplines in Sanskrit, either directly or with certain phonological adaptations.[citation needed]

Post-canonical Pali also possesses a few loan-words from local languages where Pali was used (e.g. Sri Lankans adding Sinhala words to Pali). These usages differentiate the Pali found in the Suttapiṭaka from later compositions such as the Pali commentaries on the canon and folklore (e.g., commentaries on the Jataka tales), and comparative study (and dating) of texts on the basis of such loan-words is now a specialized field unto itself.[citation needed]

Pali was not exclusively used to convey the teachings of the Buddha, as can be deduced from the existence of a number of secular texts, such as books of medical science/instruction, in Pali. However, scholarly interest in the language has been focused upon religious and philosophical literature, because of the unique window it opens on one phase in the development of Buddhism.[citation needed]

Emic views of Pali[edit]

Although Sanskrit was said[by whom?] in the Brahmanical tradition to be the unchanging language spoken by the gods, in which each word had an inherent significance, this view of language was not shared in the early Buddhist tradition,[which?] in which words were only conventional and mutable signs.[22] This view of language naturally extended to Pali, and may have contributed to its usage (as an approximation or standardization of local Middle Indic dialects) in place of Sanskrit. However, by the time of the compilation of the Pali commentaries (4th or 5th century), Pali was regarded as the natural language, the root language of all beings.[23][who?]

Comparable to Ancient Egyptian, Latin or Hebrew in the mystic traditions of the West, Pali recitations were often thought to have a supernatural power (which could be attributed to their meaning, the character of the reciter, or the qualities of the language itself), and in the early strata of Buddhist literature we can already see Pali dhāraṇīs used as charms, as, for example, against the bite of snakes[citation needed]. Many people in Theravada cultures still believe that taking a vow in Pali has a special significance, and, as one example of the supernatural power assigned to chanting in the language, the recitation of the vows of Aṅgulimāla are believed to alleviate the pain of childbirth in Sri Lanka. In Thailand, the chanting of a portion of the Abhidhammapiṭaka is believed to be beneficial to the recently departed, and this ceremony routinely occupies as much as seven working days. There is nothing in the latter text that relates to this subject, and the origins of the custom are unclear.

Phonology[edit]

This article contains IPA phonetic symbols. Without proper rendering support, you may see question marks, boxes, or other symbols instead of Unicode characters. For an introductory guide on IPA symbols, see Help:IPA.

Vowels[edit]

Height	Backness

	Front	Central	Back
High	**i** [i] **ī** [iː]		**u** [u] **ū** [uː]
Mid	**e** [e], [eː]	**a** [ɐ]	**o** [o], [oː]
Low		**ā** [aː]	

Long and short vowels are only contrastive in open syllables; in closed syllables, all vowels are always short. Short and long **e** and **o** are in complementary distribution: the short variants occur only in closed syllables, the long variants occur only in open syllables. Short and long **e** and **o** are therefore not distinct phonemes.

A sound called *anusvāra* (Skt.; Pali: *nigghahita*), represented by the letter **ṁ** (ISO 15919) or **ṃ** (ALA-LC) in romanization, and by a raised dot in most traditional alphabets, originally marked the fact that the preceding vowel was nasalized. That is, **aṁ**, **iṁ** and **uṁ** represented [ã], [ĩ] and [ũ]. In many traditional pronunciations, however, the anusvāra is pronounced more strongly, like the velar nasal [ŋ], so that these sounds are pronounced instead [ãŋ], [ĩŋ] and [ũŋ]. However pronounced, **ṁ** never follows a long vowel; **ā, ī** and **ū** are converted to the corresponding short vowels when ṁ is added to a stem ending in a long vowel, e.g. **kathā + ṁ** becomes **kathaṁ**, not *kathāṁ, **devī + ṁ** becomes **deviṁ**, not *devīṁ.

Consonants[edit]

The table below lists the consonants of Pali. In bold is the transliteration of the letter in traditional romanization, and in square brackets its pronunciation transcribed in the IPA.

			Labial	Dental/alveolar	Retroflex	Post-alveolar/Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop	Nasal		**m** [m]	**n** [n]	**ṇ** [ɳ]	**ñ** [ɲ]	(**ṅ** [ŋ])	
	voiceless	unaspirated	**p** [p]	**t** [t]	**ṭ** [ʈ]	**c** [tʃ]	**k** [k]	
		aspirated	**ph** [pʰ]	**th** [tʰ]	**ṭh** [ʈʰ]	**ch** [tʃʰ]	**kh** [kʰ]	
	voiced	unaspirated	**b** [b]	**d** [d]	**ḍ** [ɖ]	**j** [dʒ]	**g** [g]	
		aspirated	**bh** [bʱ]	**dh** [dʱ]	**ḍh** [ɖʱ]	**jh** [dʒʱ]	**gh** [gʱ]	

Fricative			**s** [s]				**h** [h]
Approximant	**central**	**v** [ʋ]		**r** [ɹ]	**y** [j]		
	lateral		**l** [l]	(**ḷ** [ɭ])			
	lateral aspirated			(**ḷh** [ɭʱ])			

Among the labial consonants, [ʋ] is labiodental and the rest is bilabial. Among the dental/alveolar consonants, the majority is dental but [s] and [l] are alveolar.

Of the sounds listed above only the three consonants in parentheses, **ṅ**, **ḷ**, and **ḷh**, are not distinct phonemes in Pali: **ṅ** only occurs before velar stops, while **ḷ** and **ḷh** are allophones of single **ḍ** and **ḍh** occurring between vowels.

Morphology[edit]

Pali is a highly inflected language, in which almost every word contains, besides the root conveying the basic meaning, one or more affixes (usually suffixes) which modify the meaning in some way. Nouns are inflected for gender, number, and case; verbal inflections convey information about person, number, tense and mood.

Nominal inflection[edit]

Pali nouns inflect for three grammatical genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter) and two numbers (singular and plural). The nouns also, in principle, display eight cases: nominative or *paccatta* case, vocative, accusative or *upayoga* case, instrumental or *karaṇa* case, dative or *sampadāna* case, ablative, genitive or *sāmin* case, and locative or *bhumma* case; however, in many instances, two or more of these cases are identical in form; this is especially true of the genitive and dative cases.

a-stems[edit]

a-stems, whose uninflected stem ends in short *a* (/ə/), are either masculine or neuter. The masculine and neuter forms differ only in the nominative, vocative, and accusative cases.

	Masculine (*loka-* "world")		**Neuter (*yāna-* "carriage")**	
	Singular	**Plural**	**Singular**	**Plural**
Nominative	loko	lokā	yānaṁ	yānāni
Vocative	loka			
Accusative	lokaṁ	loke		

Instrumental	lokena	lokehi	yānena	yānehi
Ablative	lokā (lokamhā, lokasmā; lokato)		yānā (yānamhā, yānasmā; yānato)	
Dative	lokassa (lokāya)	lokānaṁ	yānassa (yānāya)	yānānaṁ
Genitive	lokassa		yānassa	
Locative	loke (lokasmiṁ)	lokesu	yāne (yānasmiṁ)	yānesu

ā-stems[edit]

Nouns ending in ā (/aː/) are almost always feminine.

	Feminine (*kathā-* "story")	
	Singular	**Plural**
Nominative	kathā	kathāyo
Vocative	kathe	
Accusative	kathaṁ	
Instrumental	kathāya	kathāhi
Ablative		
Dative		kathānaṁ
Genitive		
Locative	kathāya, kathāyaṁ	kathāsu

i-stems and u-stems[edit]

i-stems and u-stems are either masculine or neuter. The masculine and neuter forms differ only in the nominative and accusative cases. The vocative has the same form as the nominative.

	Masculine (*isi*- "seer")		**Neuter (*akkhi*- "eye")**	
	Singular	**Plural**	**Singular**	**Plural**
Nominative	isi	isayo, isī	akkhi, akkhiṁ	akkhī, akkhīni
Vocative				
Accusative	isiṁ			
Instrumental	isinā	isihi, isīhi	akkhinā	akkhihi, akkhīhi
Ablative	isinā, isito		akkhinā, akkhito	
Dative	isino	isinaṁ, isīnaṁ	akkhino	akkhinaṁ, akkhīnaṁ
Genitive	isissa, isino		akkhissa, akkhino	
Locative	isismiṁ	isisu, isīsu	akkhismiṁ	akkhisu, akkhīsu

	Masculine (*bhikkhu*- "monk")		**Neuter (*cakkhu*- "eye")**	
	Singular	**Plural**	**Singular**	**Plural**
Nominative	bhikkhu	bhikkhavo, bhikkhū	cakkhu, cakkhuṁ	cakkhūni
Vocative				
Accusative	bhikkhuṁ			
Instrumental	bhikkhunā	bhikkhūhi	cakkhunā	cakkhūhi

Ablative				
Dative	bhikkhuno	bhikkhūnaṁ	cakkhuno	cakkhūnaṁ
Genitive	bhikkhussa, bhikkhuno	bhikkhūnaṁ, bhikkhunnaṁ	cakkhussa, cakkhuno	cakkhūnaṁ, cakkhunnaṁ
Locative	bhikkhusmiṁ	bhikkhūsu	cakkhusmiṁ	cakkhūsu

Linguistic analysis of a Pali text[edit]

From the opening of the Dhammapada:

Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā;
Manasā ce paduṭṭhena, bhāsati vā karoti vā,
Tato naṁ dukkhaṁ anveti, cakkaṁ'va vahato padaṁ.

Element for element gloss:

Mano-pubbaṅ-gam-ā dhamm-ā, mano-seṭṭh-ā mano-may-ā;
Mind-before-going-*m.pl.nom.* dharma-*m.pl.nom.*, mind-foremost-*m.pl.nom.* mind-made-*m.pl.nom.*
Manas-ā=ce paduṭṭh-ena, bhāsa-ti=vā karo-ti=vā,
Mind-*n.sg.inst.*=if corrupted-*n.sg.inst.* speak-*3.sg.pr.*=either act-*3.sg.pr.*=or,
Ta-to naṁ dukkhaṁ anv-e-ti, cakkaṁ 'va vahat-o pad-aṁ.
That-from him suffering after-go-*3.sg.pr.*, wheel as carrying(beast)-*m.sg.gen.* foot-*n.sg.acc.*

The three compounds in the first line literally mean:

manopubbaṅgama "whose precursor is mind", "having mind as a fore-goer or leader"
manoseṭṭha "whose foremost member is mind", "having mind as chief"
manomaya "consisting of mind" or "made by mind"

The literal meaning is therefore: "The dharmas have mind as their leader, mind as their chief, are made of/by mind. If [someone] either speaks or acts with a corrupted mind, from that [cause] suffering goes after him, as the wheel [of a cart follows] the foot of a draught animal."

A slightly freer translation by Acharya Buddharakkhita

Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought.
If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts suffering follows him
like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox.

Ardha-Magadhi[edit]

The Indo-Aryan languages are commonly assigned to three major groups: Old, Middle and New Indo-Aryan. The classification reflects consecutive stages in a common linguistic development, but is not merely a matter of chronology:[24] Classical Sanskrit, as a codified derivate of Vedic Sanskrit, remains mostly representative of the Old Indo-Aryan stage, even though it continued to flourish at the same time as the Middle Indo-Aryan languages.[citation needed] Conversely, a number of the morphophonological and lexical features of the Middle Indo-Aryan languages show that they are not direct continuations of Rigvedic Sanskrit, the main base of Classical Sanskrit. Instead they descend from other dialects similar to, but in some ways more archaic than Rigvedic.[24]

Sanskrit[edit]

Pali and Sanskrit are very closely related and the common characteristics of Pali and Sanskrit were always easily recognized by those in India who were familiar with both. A large part of Pali and Sanskrit word-stems are identical in form, differing only in details of inflection.

Technical terms from Sanskrit were converted into Pali by a set of conventional phonological transformatios. These transformations mimicked a subset of the phonological developments that had occurred in Proto-Pali. Because of the prevalence of these transformations, it is not always possible to tell whether a given Pali word is a part of the old Prakrit lexicon, or a transformed borrowing from Sanskrit. The existence of a Sanskrit word regularly corresponding to a Pali word is not always secure evidence of the Pali etymology, since, in some cases, artificial Sanskrit words were created by back-formation from Prakrit words.[dubious – discuss]

The following phonological processes are not intended as an exhaustive description of the historical changes which produced Pali from its Old Indic ancestor, but rather are a summary of the most common phonological equations between Sanskrit and Pali, with no claim to completeness.

Vowels and diphthongs[edit]

Sanskrit **ai** and **au** always monophthongize to Pali **e** and **o**, respectively
Examples: **maitrī** → **mettā**, **auṣadha** → **osadha**

Sanskrit **aya** and **ava** likewise often reduce to Pali **e** and **o**
Examples: **dhārayati** → **dhāreti**, **avatāra** → **otāra**, **bhavati** → **hoti**

Sanskrit **avi** becomes Pali **e** (i.e. **avi** → **ai** → **e**)
Example: **sthavira** → **thera**

Sanskrit **ṛ** appears in Pali as **a**, **i** or **u**, often agreeing with the vowel in the following syllable. **ṛ** also sometimes becomes **u** after labial consonants.
Examples: **kṛta** → **kata**, **tṛṣṇa** → **taṇha**, **smṛti** → **sati**, **ṛṣi** → **isi**, **dṛṣṭi** → **diṭṭhi**, **ṛddhi** → **iddhi**, **ṛju** → **uju**, **spṛṣṭa** → **phuṭṭha**, **vṛddha** → **vuddha**
Examples: **kṣānti** → **khanti**, **rājya** → **rajja**, **īśvara** → **issara**, **tīrṇa** → **tiṇṇa**, **pūrva** → **pubba**
Examples: **śaraṇa** → **saraṇa**, **doṣa** → **dosa**
Example: **cakravāḍa** → **cakkavāḷa**, **virūḍha** → **virūḷha**
Examples: **prāṇa** → **pāṇa** (not *ppāṇa*), **sthavira** → **thera** (not *tthera*), **dhyāna** → **jhāna** (not *jjhāna*), **jñāti** → **ñāti** (not *ññāti*)
Examples: **uttrāsa** → **uttāsa** (not *utttāsa*), **mantra** → **manta** (not *mantta*), **indra** → **inda** (not *inda*), **vandhya** → **vañjha** (not *vañjjha*)
Example: **sarva** → savva → **sabba**, **pravrajati** → pavvajati → **pabbajati**, **divya** → divva → **dibba**, **nirvāṇa** → nivvāṇa → **nibbāna**
Examples: **duḥkṛta** → **dukkata**, **duḥkha** → **dukkha**, **duḥprajña** → **duppañña**, **niḥkrodha** (=**niṣkrodha**) → **nikkodha**, **niḥpakva** (=**niṣpakva**) → **nippakka**, **niḥśoka** → **nissoka**, **niḥsattva** → **nissatta**: **vimukti** → **vimutti**, **dugdha** → **duddha**, **utpāda** → **uppāda**, **pudgala** → **puggala**, **udghoṣa** → **ugghosa**, **adbhuta** → **abbhuta**, **śabda** → **sadda**
Example: **unmatta** → **ummatta**, **pradyumna** → **pajjunna**
Examples: **prajñā** → **paññā**, **jñāti** → **ñāti**
Examples: **mārga** → **magga**, **karma** → **kamma**, **varṣa** → **vassa**, **kalpa** → **kappa**, **sarva** → savva → **sabba**
Examples: **durlabha** → **dullabha**, **nirlopa** → **nillopa**
Examples: **udvigna** → uvvigga → **ubbigga**, **dvādaśa** → **bārasa** (beside **dvādasa**)
Examples: **ut+sava** → **ussava**, **ud+yāna** → **uyyāna**
Examples: **agni** → **aggi**, **ātman** → **atta**, **prāpnoti** → **pappoti**, **śaknoti** → **sakkoti**

Examples: **smarati** → **sarati**, **smṛti** → **sati**
Examples: **tīkṣṇa** → tikṣa → **tikkha**, **lakṣmī** → lakṣī →**lakkhī**
Examples: **prāṇa** → **pāṇa**, **grāma** → **gāma**, **śrāvaka** → **sāvaka**, **agra** → **agga**, **indra** → **inda**, **p ravrajati** → pavvajati → **pabbajati**, **aśru** → **assu**
Examples: **cyavati** → **cavati**, **jyotiṣ** → **joti**, **rājya** → **rajja**, **matsya** → macchya → **maccha**, **lapsyate** → lacchyate → **lacchati**, **abhyāgata** → **abbhāgata**, **ākhyāti** → **akkhāti**, **saṁkhyā** → **saṅkhā** (but also **saṅkhyā**), **ramya** → **ramma**
Example: **divya** → divva → **dibba**, **veditavya** → veditavva → **veditabba**, **bhāvya** → bhavva → **bhabba**
Examples: **paśyati** → **passati**, **śyena** → **sena**, **aśva** → **assa**, **īśvara** → **issara**, **kariṣyati** → **kar issati**, **tasya** → **tassa**, **svāmin** → **sāmī**
Examples: **pakva** → **pakka**, **catvāri** → **cattāri**, **sattva** → **satta**, **dhvaja** → **dhaja** **Partialpph**
Examples: **paścāt** → **pacchā**, **asti** → **atthi**, **stava** → **thava**, **śreṣṭha** → **seṭṭha**, **aṣṭa** → **aṭṭha**, **s parśa** → **phassa**
Examples: **śāstra** → śasta → **sattha**, **rāṣṭra** → raṣṭa → **raṭṭha**
Examples: **vatsa** → **vaccha**, **apsaras** → **accharā**
Examples: **bhikṣu** → **bhikkhu**, **kṣānti** → **khanti**
Examples: **tyajati** → cyajati → **cajati**, **satya** → sacya → **sacca**, **mithyā** → michyā → **micchā**, **vidyā** → vijyā → **vijjā**, **madhya** → majhya → **majjha**, **anya** → añya → **añña**, **puṇya** → puñya → **puñña**, **vandhya** → vañjhya → vañjja → **vañjha**
Examples: **āmra** → ambra → **amba**, **tāmra** → **tamba**
Example: **ratna** → **ratana**, **padma** → **paduma** (**u** influenced by labial **m**)
Examples: **snāna** → **sināna**, **sneha** → **sineha**
Examples: **kleśa** → **kilesa**, **glāna** → **gilāna**, **mlāyati** → **milāyati**, **ślāghati** → **silāghati**
Example: **śrī** → **sirī**
Example: **ārya** → arya → **ariya**, **sūrya** → surya → **suriya**, **vīrya** → virya → **viriya**
Example: **arhati** → **arahati**, **garhā** → **garahā**, **barhiṣ** → **barihisa**
Examples: **caitya** → **cetiya** (not *cecca*), **vajra** → **vajira** (not *vajja*) **Other**
Examples: **tṛṣṇa** → **taṇha**, **uṣṇīṣa** → **uṇhīsa**, **asmi** → **amhi**
Example: **praśna** → praśña → **pañha**
Examples: **jihvā** → **jivhā**, **gṛhya** → **gayha**, **guhya** → **guyha**
Example: **gṛhṇāti** → **gaṇhāti**
Examples: **śreyas** → **seyya**, **Maitreya** → **Metteyya**
Examples: **bhavati** → **hoti**, **-ebhiṣ** → **-ehi**, **laghu** → **lahu**
Examples: **jñāna** → **ñāṇa** (not *ñāna*), **dahati** → **ḍahati** (beside Pali **dahati**) **nīḍa** → **nīla** (not *nīḷa*), **sthāna** → **ṭhāna** (not *thāna*), **duḥkṛta** → **dukkaṭa** (beside Pali **dukkata**)

Basic Latin: U+0000 – U+007F

Latin-1 Supplement: U+0080 – U+00FF

Latin Extended-A: U+0100 – U+017F

Latin Extended-B: U+0180 – U+024F

Latin Extended Additional: U+1E00 – U+1EFF

Gautama Buddha

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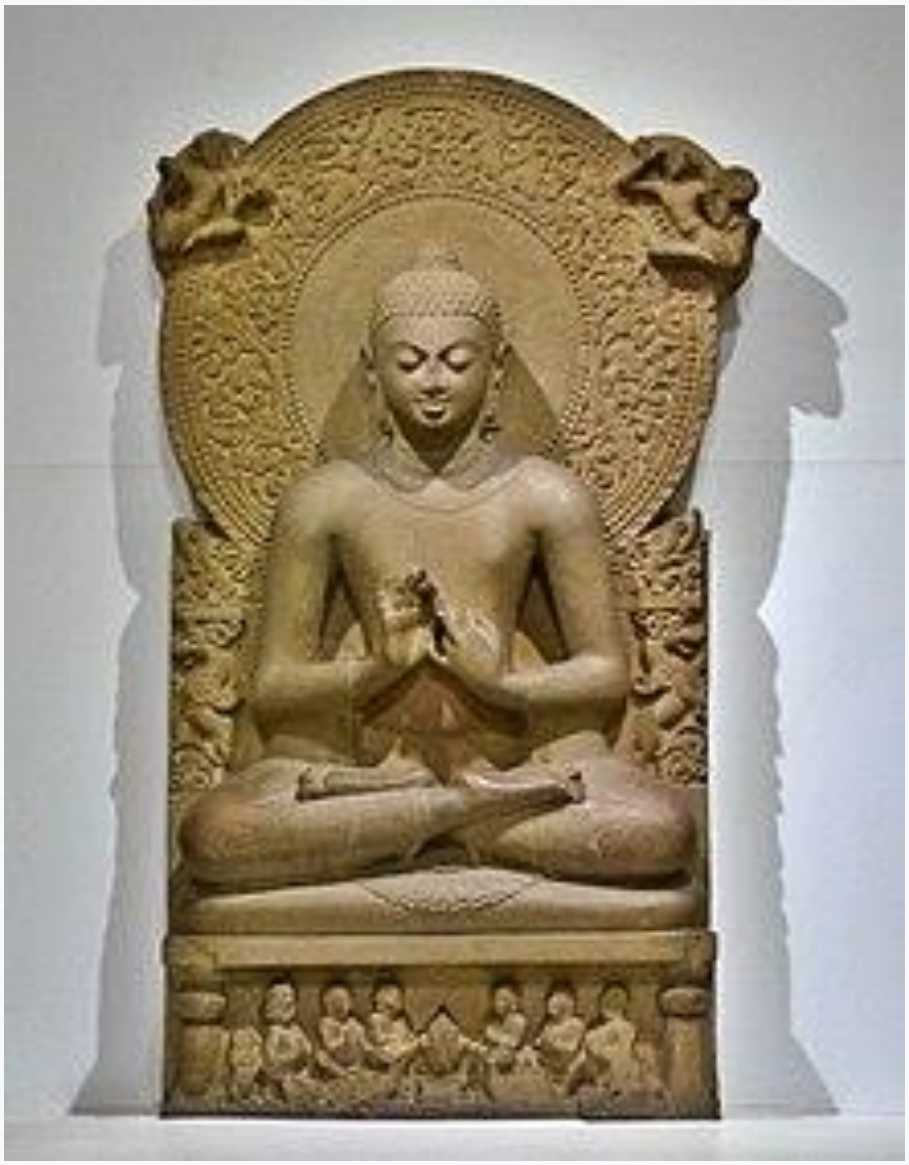
Not to be confused with the Chinese monk Budai ("the laughing Buddha") or Budha in Hindu astrology.

"Buddha" and "Gautama" redirect here. For the Buddhist title, see Buddha (title). For other uses, see Buddha (disambiguation) and Gautama (disambiguation).

Gautama Buddha



A statue of the Buddha from Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh, India, circa 475 CE. The Buddha is depicted teaching in the lotus position, while making the Dharmacakra mudrā.

Other names	Siddhartha Gautama, Siddhattha Gotama, Shakyamuni
Personal	
Born	Siddhartha Gautama c. 563 or c. 480 BCE[1][2][note 1] Lumbini, Shakya Republic (according to Buddhist tradition)[note 2]
Died	c. 483 or c. 400 BCE (aged 80)[note 1] Kushinagar, Malla Republic (according to Buddhist tradition)[note 3]
Religion	Buddhism
Spouse	Yasodharā
Children	Rāhula
Parents	Śuddhodana (father) Maya Devi (mother)
Known for	Founder of Buddhism
Other names	Siddhartha Gautama, Siddhattha Gotama, Shakyamuni
Senior posting	
Predecessor	Kassapa Buddha
Successor	Maitreya

Siddhārtha Gautama (Sanskrit/Devanagari: सिद्धार्थ गौतम *Siddhārtha Gautama*, c. 563/480 – c. 483/400 BCE)[note 1] or **Siddhattha Gotama** in Pali,[note 4] also called the **Gautama Buddha**,[note 5] the **Shakyamuni Buddha** ("Buddha, Sage of the Shakyas")[4][note 6] or simply the **Buddha**, after the title of *Buddha*, was a monk (śramaṇa),[5][6] mendicant, sage,[4] philosopher, teacher and religious leader on whose teachings Buddhism was founded.[7] He is believed to have lived and taught mostly in the northeastern part of ancient India sometime between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE.[8][note 7]

Gautama taught a Middle Way between sensual indulgence and the severe asceticism found in the śramaṇa movement[9] common in his region. He later taught throughout other regions of eastern India such as Magadha and Kosala.[8][10]

Gautama is the primary figure in Buddhism. He is believed by Buddhists to be an enlightened teacher who attained full Buddhahood and shared his insights to help sentient beings end rebirth and suffering. Accounts of his life, discourses and monastic rules are believed by Buddhists to have been summarised after his death and memorized by his followers. Various collections of teachings attributed to him were passed down by oral tradition and first committed to writing about 400 years later.

Historical Siddhārtha Gautama

Scholars are hesitant to make unqualified claims about the historical facts of the Buddha's life. Most people accept that the Buddha lived, taught, and founded a monastic order during the Mahajanapada era during the reign of Bimbisara (c. 558 – c. 491 BCE, or c. 400 BCE),[11][12][13] the ruler of the Magadha empire, and died during the early years of the reign of Ajatasatru, who was the successor of Bimbisara, thus making him a younger contemporary of Mahavira, the Jain tirthankara.[14][15] While the general sequence of "birth, maturity, renunciation, search, awakening and liberation, teaching, death" is widely accepted,[16] there is less consensus on the veracity of many details contained in traditional biographies.[17][18]

The times of Gautama's birth and death are uncertain. Most historians in the early 20th century dated his lifetime as c. 563 BCE to 483 BCE.[1][19] More recently his death is dated later, between 411 and 400 BCE, while at a symposium on this question held in 1988,[20][21][22] the majority of those who presented definite opinions gave dates within 20 years either side of 400 BCE for the Buddha's death.[1][23][note 7] These alternative chronologies, however, have not been accepted by all historians.[28][29][note 8]

Historical context

Ancient kingdoms and cities of India during the time of the Buddha (circa 500 BCE).

The evidence of the early texts suggests that Siddhārtha Gautama was born into the Shakya clan, a community that was on the periphery, both geographically and culturally, of the eastern Indian subcontinent in the 5th century BCE.[34] One of his usual names was "Sakamuni" or "Sakyamunī" ("Sage of the Shakyas"). It was either a small republic, or an oligarchy, and his father was an elected chieftain, or oligarch.[34] According to the Buddhist tradition, Gautama was born in Lumbini, now in modern-day Nepal, and raised in the Shakya

capital of Kapilvastu, which may have been either in what is present day Tilaurakot, Nepal or Piprahwa, India.[note 2] According to Buddhist tradition, he obtained his enlightenment in Bodh Gaya, gave his first sermon in Sarnath, and died in Kushinagar.

Apart from the Vedic Brahmins, the Buddha's lifetime coincided with the flourishing of influential Śramaṇa schools of thought like Ājīvika, Cārvāka, Jainism, and Aj̃ñana.[51] Brahmajala Sutta records sixty-two such schools of thought. In this context, a śramaṇa refers to one who labors, toils, or exerts themselves (for some higher or religious purpose). It was also the age of influential thinkers like Mahavira,[52] Pūrana Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalī, Pakudha Kaccāyana, and Sañjaya Belaṭṭhaputta, as recorded in Samaññaphala Sutta, whose viewpoints the Buddha most certainly must have been acquainted with.[53][54][note 10] Indeed, Sariputta and Moggallāna, two of the foremost disciples of the Buddha, were formerly the foremost disciples of Sañjaya Belaṭṭhaputta, the sceptic;[56] and the Pali canon frequently depicts Buddha engaging in debate with the adherents of rival schools of thought. There is also philological evidence to suggest that the two masters, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, were indeed historical figures and they most probably taught Buddha two different forms of meditative techniques.[57] Thus, Buddha was just one of the many śramaṇa philosophers of that time.[58] In an era where holiness of person was judged by their level of asceticism,[59] Buddha was a reformist within the śramaṇa movement, rather than a reactionary against Vedic Brahminism.[60]

Historically, the life of the Buddha also coincided with the Achaemenid conquest of the Indus Valley during the rule of Darius I from about 517/516 BCE.[61] This Achaemenid occupation of the areas of Gandhara and Sindh, which was to last for about two centuries, was accompanied by the introduction of Achaemenid religions, reformed Mazdaism or early Zoroastrianism, to which Buddhism might have in part reacted.[61] In particular, the ideas of the Buddha may have partly consisted of a rejection of the "absolutist" or "perfectionist" ideas contained in these Achaemenid religions.[61]

Earliest sources

Main article: Early Buddhist Texts

The words "Bu-dhe" (□□□□, the Buddha) and "Sa-kya-mu-nī " (□□□□□□□□, "Sage of the Shakyas") in Brahmi script, on Ashoka's Rummindei Minor Pillar Edict (circa 250 BCE).

No written records about Gautama were found from his lifetime or from the one or two centuries thereafter. But from the middle of the 3rd century BCE, several Edicts of Ashoka (reigned c. 269–232 BCE) mention the Buddha, and particularly Ashoka's Rummindei Minor Pillar Edict commemorates the Emperor's pilgrimage to Lumbini as the Buddha's birthplace, calling him the *Buddha Shakyamuni* (Brahmi script: □□□ □□□□□□□□ *Bu-dha Sa-kya-mu-nī*, "Buddha, Sage of the Shakyas").[62] Another one of his edicts (Minor Rock Edict No. 3) mentions the titles of several *Dhamma* texts, establishing the existence of a written Buddhist tradition at least by the time of the Maurya era. These texts may be the precursor of the Pāli Canon.[63][64][note 11]

Bharhut inscription: *Bhagavato Sakamunino Bodho* (□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□ "The illumination of the Blessed Sakamuni"), circa 100 BCE.[65]

"Sakamuni" in also mentioned in the reliefs of Bharhut, dated to circa 100 BCE, in relation with his illumination and the Bodhi tree, with the inscription *Bhagavato Sakamunino Bodho* ("The illumination of the Blessed Sakamuni").[65]

The oldest surviving Buddhist manuscripts are the Gandhāran Buddhist texts, reported to have been found in or around Haḍḍa near Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan and now preserved in the British Library. They are written in the Gāndhārī language using the Kharosthi script on twenty-seven birch bark manuscripts and date from the first century BCE to the third century CE.[66]

On the basis of philological evidence, Indologist and Pali expert Oskar von Hinüber says that some of the Pali suttas have retained very archaic place-names, syntax, and historical data from close to the Buddha's lifetime, including the *Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta* which contains a detailed account of the Buddha's final days. Hinüber proposes a composition date of no later than 350–320 BCE for this text, which would allow for a "true historical memory" of the events approximately 60 years prior if the Short Chronology for the Buddha's lifetime is accepted (but he also points out that such a text was originally intended more as hagiography than as an exact historical record of events).[67][68]

Traditional biographies

The first known anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha, here surrounded by Brahma (left) and Śakra (right). Bimaran Casket, mid-1st century CE, British Museum.[69][70]

Biographical sources

The sources for the life of Siddhārtha Gautama are a variety of different, and sometimes conflicting, traditional biographies. These include the *Buddhacarita*, *Lalitavistara Sūtra*, *Mahāvastu*, and the *Nidānakathā*.[71] Of these, the *Buddhacarita*[72][73][74] is the earliest full biography, an epic poem written by the poet Aśvaghoṣa in the first century CE.[75] The *Lalitavistara Sūtra* is the next oldest biography, a Mahāyāna/Sarvāstivāda biography dating to the 3rd century CE.[76] The *Mahāvastu* from the Mahāsāmghika Lokottaravāda tradition is another major biography, composed incrementally until perhaps the 4th century CE.[76] The Dharmaguptaka biography of the Buddha is the most exhaustive, and is entitled the *Abhiniṣkramaṇa Sūtra*,[77] and various Chinese translations of this date between the 3rd and 6th century CE. The *Nidānakathā* is from the Theravada tradition in Sri Lanka and was composed in the 5th century by Buddhaghosa.[78]

From canonical sources come the Jataka tales, the *Mahapadana Sutta* (DN 14), and the *Achariyabhuta Sutta* (MN 123), which include selective accounts that may be older, but are not full biographies. The Jātakas retell previous lives of Gautama as a bodhisattva, and the first

collection of these can be dated among the earliest Buddhist texts.[79] The *Mahāpadāna Sutta* and *Achariyabhuta Sutta* both recount miraculous events surrounding Gautama's birth, such as the bodhisattva's descent from the Tusita Heaven into his mother's womb.

Nature of traditional depictions

Māyā miraculously giving birth to Siddhārtha. Sanskrit, palm-leaf manuscript. Nālandā, Bihar, India. Pāla period

In the earliest Buddhist texts, the nikāyas and āgamas, the Buddha is not depicted as possessing omniscience (*sabbaññu*)[80] nor is he depicted as being an eternal transcendent (*lokottara*) being. According to Bhikkhu Analayo, ideas of the Buddha's omniscience (along with an increasing tendency to deify him and his biography) are found only later, in the Mahayana sutras and later Pali commentaries or texts such as the *Mahāvastu*.[80] In the *Sandaka Sutta*, the Buddha's disciple Ananda outlines an argument against the claims of teachers who say they are all knowing [81] while in the *Tevijjavacchagotta Sutta* the Buddha himself states that he has never made a claim to being omniscient, instead he claimed to have the "higher knowledges" (abhijñā).[82] The earliest biographical material from the Pali Nikayas focuses on the Buddha's life as a śramaṇa, his search for enlightenment under various teachers such as Alara Kalama and his forty-five-year career as a teacher.[83]

Traditional biographies of Gautama generally include numerous miracles, omens, and supernatural events. The character of the Buddha in these traditional biographies is often that of a fully transcendent (Skt. *lokottara*) and perfected being who is unencumbered by the mundane world. In the *Mahāvastu*, over the course of many lives, Gautama is said to have developed supramundane abilities including: a painless birth conceived without intercourse; no need for sleep, food, medicine, or bathing, although engaging in such "in conformity with the world"; omniscience, and the ability to "suppress karma".[84] Nevertheless, some of the more ordinary details of his life have been gathered from these traditional sources. In modern times there has been an attempt to form a secular understanding of Siddhārtha Gautama's life by omitting the traditional supernatural elements of his early biographies.

Andrew Skilton writes that the Buddha was never historically regarded by Buddhist traditions as being merely human:

It is important to stress that, despite modern Theravada teachings to the contrary (often a sop to skeptical Western pupils), he was never seen as being merely human. For instance, he is often described as having the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks or signs of a *mahāpuruṣa*, "superman"; the Buddha himself denied that he was either a man or a god; and in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* he states that he could live for an aeon were he asked to do so.[85]

The ancient Indians were generally unconcerned with chronologies, being more focused on philosophy. Buddhist texts reflect this tendency, providing a clearer picture of what Gautama may have taught than of the dates of the events in his life. These texts contain descriptions of the culture and daily life of ancient India which can be corroborated from the Jain scriptures, and make the Buddha's time the earliest period in Indian history for which significant accounts exist.[86] British author Karen Armstrong writes that although there is very little information that can be considered historically sound, we can be reasonably confident that Siddhārtha Gautama did exist as a historical figure.[87] Michael Carrithers goes a bit further by stating that the most general outline of "birth, maturity, renunciation, search, awakening and liberation, teaching, death" must be true.[88]

Biography

Conception and birth

Maya's dream of the Birth of Gautama Siddhartha.

Birthplace of Gautama Buddha in Lumbini, Nepal,[note 2][89] a holy shrine also for many non-Buddhists.[note 12]

The Buddhist tradition regards Lumbini, in present-day Nepal to be the birthplace of the Buddha.[90][note 2] He grew up in Kapilavastu.[note 2] The exact site of ancient Kapilavastu is unknown.[91] It may have been either Piprahwa, Uttar Pradesh, in present-day India,[46] or Tilaurakot, in present-day Nepal.[92] Both places belonged to the Sakya territory, and are located only 15 miles (24 km) apart.[92]

Gautama was born to a Hindu Kshatriya family,[93][note 13] the son of Śuddhodana, "an elected chief of the Shakya clan",[8] whose capital was Kapilavastu, and who were later annexed by the growing Kingdom of Kosala during the Buddha's lifetime. Gautama was the family name. His mother, Maya (Māyādevī), Suddhodana's wife, was a Koliyan princess. Legend has it that, on the night Siddhartha was conceived, Queen Maya dreamt that a white elephant with six white tusks entered her right side,[95][96] and ten months later[97] Siddhartha was born. As was the Shakya tradition, when his mother Queen Maya became pregnant, she left Kapilavastu for her father's kingdom to give birth. However, her son is said to have been born on the way, at Lumbini, in a garden beneath a sal tree.[*citation needed*]

The day of the Buddha's birth is widely celebrated in Theravada countries as Vesak.[98] Buddha's Birthday is called *Buddha Purnima* in Nepal, Bangladesh, and India as he is believed to have been born on a full moon day. Various sources hold that the Buddha's mother died at his birth, a few days or seven days later. The infant was given the name Siddhartha (Pāli: Siddhattha), meaning "he who achieves his aim". During the birth celebrations, the hermit seer Asita journeyed from his mountain abode and announced that the child would either become a great king (chakravartin) or a great sadhu.[99] By traditional account,[*which?*] this occurred after Siddhartha placed his feet in Asita's hair and Asita examined the birthmarks. Suddhodana held a naming ceremony on the fifth day, and invited eight Brahmin scholars to read the future. All gave a dual prediction that the baby would either become a great king or a great holy

man.[99] Kondañña, the youngest, and later to be the first arhat other than the Buddha, was reputed to be the only one who unequivocally predicted that Siddhartha would become a Buddha.[100]

While later tradition and legend characterised Śuddhodana as a hereditary monarch, the descendant of the Suryavansha (Solar dynasty) of *Ikṣvāku* (Pāli: Okkāka), many scholars think that Śuddhodana was the elected chief of a tribal confederacy.[citation needed]

Early texts suggest that Gautama was not familiar with the dominant religious teachings of his time until he left on his religious quest, which is said to have been motivated by existential concern for the human condition.[101] The state of the Shakya clan was not a monarchy and seems to have been structured either as an oligarchy, or as a form of republic.[102] The more egalitarian gana-sangha form of government, as a political alternative to the strongly hierarchical kingdoms, may have influenced the development of the śramanic Jain and Buddhist sanghas, where monarchies tended toward Vedic Brahmanism.[103]

Birth and childhood of the Buddha

Maya's dream, Bharhut, c. 150 BCE.

-

Maya's dream, Gandhara, 2nd century CE.

-

Birth of the Buddha.

-

The Infant Buddha Taking A Bath, Gandhara 2nd century CE.

-

The infant Buddha taking the Seven Steps. Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhara.

Early life and marriage

Departure of Prince Siddhartha

Siddhartha was brought up by his mother's younger sister, Maha Pajapati.[104] By tradition, he is said to have been destined by birth to the life of a prince and had three palaces (for seasonal occupation) built for him. His father, said to be King Śuddhodana, wishing for his son to be a great king, is said to have shielded him from religious teachings and from knowledge of human suffering. While Śuddhodana has traditionally been depicted as a king, and Siddhartha as his prince, more recent scholarship suggests the Shakya were in-fact organised as a semi-republican oligarchy rather than a monarchy.[105]

When he reached the age of 16, his father reputedly arranged his marriage to a cousin of the same age named Yaśodharā (Pāli: Yasodharā). According to the early Buddhist Texts of several schools, and numerous post-canonical accounts, she gave birth to a son, named Rāhula.[106] Siddhartha is said to have spent 29 years as a prince in Kapilavastu. Although his father ensured that Siddhartha was provided with everything he could want or need, Buddhist scriptures say that the future Buddha felt that material wealth was not life's ultimate goal.[104]

Renunciation and ascetic life

See also: Great Renunciation

The Victory of Buddha

The "Great Departure" of Siddhartha Gautama, surrounded by a halo, he is accompanied by numerous guards and devata who have come to pay homage; Gandhara, Kushan period

Prince Siddhartha shaves his hair and becomes an ascetic. Borobudur, 8th century

Siddhartha Gautama continued to ponder about religious questions.[107] At the age of 29, Gautama left his palace to meet his subjects. Despite his father's efforts to hide from him the sick, aged and suffering, Gautama is said to have seen an old man. When his charioteer Chandaka (Pali: Channa) explained to him that all people grew old, the prince went on further trips beyond the palace. On these he encountered a diseased man, a decaying corpse, and an ascetic that inspired him.[108][109] Traditional accounts state that he saw these for the first time in his life. Shortly after, Gautama woke up at night and saw his female servants lying in unattractive poses, which shocked him.[110] Therefore, he discovered what he would later understand more deeply during his enlightenment: suffering and the end of suffering.[111] Some time later, he heard the news that a son had been born to him.[112] Moved by all the things he had experienced, he decided to leave the palace behind in the middle of the night against the will of his father, to live the life of a wandering ascetic.[108] Accompanied by Channa and riding his horse Kanthaka, Gautama left his palace for the life of a mendicant, leaving behind his son Rahula and Yaśodhara.[113] He traveled to the river Anomiya with Chandaka and Kanthaka, and cut off his hair. Leaving his servant and horse behind, he journeyed into the woods and

changed into monk's robes there,[114] though in some other versions of the story, he received the robes from a *brahma* deity at Anomiya.[115]

The now mendicant Gautama began his ascetic life. He went to Rajagaha (present-day Rajgir), begging for alms in the streets. After King Bimbisara's men recognised Gautama and the king learned of his quest, Bimbisara offered Gautama a share of his kingdom. Gautama rejected the offer but promised to visit the king's kingdom of Magadha first, upon attaining enlightenment.[116][117]

Siddhartha Gautama left Rajagaha and practised under two teachers of yogic meditation.[118][119][120] After mastering the teachings of the first master, Āraḍa Kālāma (Pali: Alara Kalama), he was asked by him to succeed him. However, Gautama felt unsatisfied by the practice, and moved on to become a student of Udraka Rāmaputra (Pali: Udaka Ramaputta).[121] With him, he achieved high levels of meditative consciousness and was again asked to succeed his teacher. But, once more, he was not satisfied and moved on.[122]

Awakening

The Buddha surrounded by the demons of Māra. Sanskrit palm leaf manuscript. Nālandā, Bihar, India. Pāla period

See also: Enlightenment in Buddhism

Main articles: Moksha and Nirvana (Buddhism)

Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya, India, where Gautama Buddha attained *nirvana* under the Bodhi Tree (left)

According to the early Buddhist texts,[123] after realising that meditative dhyana was the right path to awakening, but that extreme asceticism did not work, Gautama discovered what Buddhists know as being, the Middle Way[123]—a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, or the Noble Eightfold Path, as described in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, which is regarded as the first discourse of the Buddha.[123] In a famous incident, after becoming starved and weakened, he is said to have accepted milk and rice pudding from a village girl named Sujata.[124] Such was his emaciated appearance that she wrongly believed him to be a spirit that had granted her a wish.[124]

The gilded "Emaciated Buddha statue" in an Ubosoth in Bangkok representing the stage of his asceticism

Following this incident, Gautama was famously seated under a pipal tree—now known as the Bodhi tree—in Bodh Gaya, India, when he vowed never to arise until he had found the truth.[125] Kaundinya and four other companions, believing that he had abandoned his search and become undisciplined, ceased to stay with him, and went to somewhere else. After a reputed 49 days of meditation, at the age of 35, he is said to have attained Enlightenment,[125][126] and became known as the *Buddha* or "Awakened One" ("Buddha" is also sometimes translated as "The Enlightened One").

According to some sutras of the Pali canon, at the time of his awakening he realised complete insight into the Four Noble Truths, thereby attaining liberation from *samsara*, the endless cycle of rebirth, suffering and dying again.[127][128][129] According to scholars, this story of the awakening and the stress on "liberating insight" is a later development in the Buddhist tradition, where the Buddha may have regarded the practice of *dhyana* as leading to *nirvana* and *moksha*.[130][131][127][note 14]

Nirvana is the extinguishing of the "fires" of desire, hatred, and ignorance, that keep the cycle of suffering and rebirth going.[132] Nirvana is also regarded as the "end of the world", in that no personal identity or boundaries of the mind remain.[*citation needed*] In such a state, a being is said to possess the Ten Characteristics, belonging to every Buddha.[*citation needed*]

According to a story in the *Āyācana Sutta* (Samyutta Nikaya VI.1)—a scripture found in the Pāli and other canons—immediately after his awakening, the Buddha debated whether or not he should teach the *Dharma* to others. He was concerned that humans were so overpowered by ignorance, greed, and hatred that they could never recognise the path, which is subtle, deep and hard to grasp. However, in the story, Brahmā Sahampati convinced him, arguing that at least some will understand it. The Buddha relented and agreed to teach.

Formation of the sangha

Dhamek Stupa in Sarnath, India, site of the first teaching of the Buddha in which he taught the Four Noble Truths to his first five disciples

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Mulagandhakuti, Remains of Buddha's hut in Jetavana Monastery, Shravasti, India, Where the Buddha delivered majority of his discourses

After his awakening, the Buddha met Taphussa and Bhallika—two merchant brothers from the city of Balkh in what is currently Afghanistan—who became his first lay disciples. It is said that each was given hairs from his head, which are now claimed to be enshrined as relics in the Shwe Dagon Temple in Rangoon, Burma. The Buddha intended to visit Asita, and his former teachers, Alara Kalama and Udaka Ramaputta, to explain his findings, but they had already died.

He then traveled to the Deer Park near Varanasi (Benares) in northern India, where he set in motion what Buddhists call the Wheel of Dharma by delivering his first sermon to the five companions with whom he had sought enlightenment. Together with him, they formed the first *saṅgha*: the company of Buddhist monks.

All five become arahants, and within the first two months, with the conversion of Yasa and fifty-four of his friends, the number of such arahants is said to have grown to 60. The conversion of three brothers named Kassapa followed, with their reputed 200, 300 and 500 disciples, respectively. This swelled the sangha to more than 1,000.

Travels and teaching

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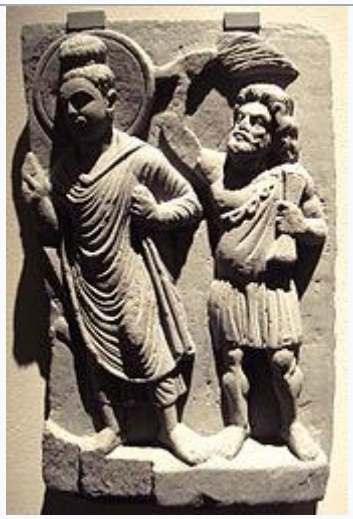


Buddha with his protector Vajrapani, Gandhāra, 2nd century CE, Ostasiatisches Kunst-Museum

For the remaining 45 years of his life, the Buddha is said to have traveled in the Gangetic Plain, in what is now Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and southern Nepal, teaching a diverse range of people: from nobles to servants, murderers such as Angulimala, and cannibals such as Alavaka.[133] Although the Buddha's language remains unknown, it is likely that he taught in one or more of a variety of closely related Middle Indo-Aryan dialects, of which Pali may be a standardisation.

The sangha traveled through the subcontinent, expounding the dharma. This continued throughout the year, except during the four months of the Vassa rainy season when ascetics of all religions rarely traveled. One reason was that it was more difficult to do so without causing harm to animal life. At this time of year, the sangha would retreat to monasteries, public parks or forests, where people would come to them.

A view of Vulture Peak, Rajgir, India where the Atanatiya Sutta was held

The first vassana was spent at Varanasi when the sangha was formed. After this, the Buddha kept a promise to travel to Rajagaha, capital of Magadha, to visit King Bimbisara. During this visit, Sariputta and Maudgalyayana were converted by Assaji, one of the first five disciples, after which they were to become the Buddha's two foremost followers. The Buddha spent the next three seasons at Veluvana Bamboo Grove monastery in Rajagaha, the capital of Magadha.

Upon hearing of his son's awakening, Suddhodana sent, over a period, ten delegations to ask him to return to Kapilavastu. On the first nine occasions, the delegates failed to deliver the message and instead joined the sangha to become arahants. The tenth delegation, led by Kaludayi, a childhood friend of Gautama's (who also became an arahant), however, delivered the message.

Now two years after his awakening, the Buddha agreed to return, and made a two-month journey by foot to Kapilavastu, teaching the dharma as he went. At his return, the royal palace prepared a midday meal, but the sangha was making an alms round in Kapilavastu. Hearing this, Suddhodana approached his son, the Buddha, saying:

Ours is the warrior lineage of Mahamassata, and not a single warrior has gone seeking alms.

The Buddha is said to have replied:

That is not the custom of your royal lineage. But it is the custom of my Buddha lineage. Several thousands of Buddhas have gone by seeking alms.

Buddhist texts say that Suddhodana invited the sangha into the palace for the meal, followed by a dharma talk. After this he is said to have become a sotapanna. During the visit, many members of the royal family joined the sangha. The Buddha's cousins Ananda and Anuruddha became two of his five chief disciples. At the age of seven, his son Rahula also joined, and became one of his ten chief disciples. His half-brother Nanda also joined and became an arahant.

Of the Buddha's disciples, Sariputta, Maudgalyayana, Mahakasyapa, Ananda and Anuruddha are believed to have been the five closest to him. His ten foremost disciples were reputedly completed by the quintet of Upali, Subhoti, Rahula, Mahakaccana and Punna.

In the fifth vassana, the Buddha was staying at Mahavana near Vesali when he heard news of the impending death of his father. He is said to have gone to Suddhodana and taught the dharma, after which his father became an arahant.

The last days of Buddha teachings

The king's death and cremation were to inspire the creation of an order of nuns. Buddhist texts record that the Buddha was reluctant to ordain women. His foster mother Maha Pajapati, for example, approached him, asking to join the sangha, but he refused. Maha Pajapati, however, was so intent on the path of awakening that she led a group of royal Sakyan and Koliyan ladies, which followed the sangha on a long journey to Rajagaha. In time, after Ananda championed their cause, the Buddha is said to have reconsidered and, five years after the formation of the sangha agreed to the ordination of women as nuns. He reasoned that males and females had an equal capacity for awakening. But he gave women additional rules (Vinaya) to follow.

Mahaparinirvana (death)

The Buddha's entry into *parinirvana*. Sanskrit palm leaf manuscript. Nālandā, Bihar, India. Pāla period

According to the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* of the Pali canon, at the age of 80, the Buddha announced that he would soon reach *parinirvana*, or the final deathless state, and abandon his earthly body. After this, the Buddha ate his last meal, which he had received as an offering from a blacksmith named Cunda. Falling violently ill, Buddha instructed his attendant Ānanda to convince Cunda that the meal eaten at his place had nothing to do with his death and that his meal would be a source of the greatest merit as it provided the last meal for a Buddha.[134] Mettanando and von Hinüber argue that the Buddha died of mesenteric infarction, a symptom of old age, rather than food poisoning.[135][136]

The precise contents of the Buddha's final meal are not clear, due to variant scriptural traditions and ambiguity over the translation of certain significant terms; the Theravada tradition generally believes that the Buddha was offered some kind of pork, while the Mahayana tradition believes that the Buddha consumed some sort of truffle or other mushroom. These may reflect the different traditional views on Buddhist vegetarianism and the precepts for monks and nuns.

Buddha's cremation stupa, Kushinagar (Kushinara).

Waley suggests that Theravadins would take *suukaramaddava* (the contents of the Buddha's last meal), which can translate literally as *pig-soft*, to mean "soft flesh of a pig" or "pig's soft-food", that is, after Neumann, a soft food favoured by pigs, assumed to be a truffle. He argues (also after Neumann) that as "plant names tend to be local and dialectical", as there are several plants known to have *suukara-* (pig) as part of their names,[note 15] and as Pali Buddhism developed in an area remote from the Buddha's death, *suukaramaddava* could easily have been a type of plant whose local name was unknown to those in Pali regions. Specifically, local writers writing soon after the Buddha's death knew more about their flora than Theravadin commentator Buddhaghosa who lived hundreds of years and hundreds of kilometers remote in time and space from the events described. Unaware that it may have been a local plant name and with no Theravadin prohibition against eating animal flesh, Theravadins would not have questioned the Buddha eating meat and interpreted the term accordingly.[137]

The sharing of the relics of the Buddha, Zenyōmitsu-Temple Museum, Tokyo

According to Buddhist tradition, the Buddha died at Kuśināra (present-day Kushinagar, India), which became a pilgrimage centre.[138] Ananda protested the Buddha's decision to enter *parinirvana* in the abandoned jungles of Kuśināra of the Malla kingdom. The Buddha, however, is said to have reminded Ananda how Kushinara was a land once ruled by a righteous wheel-turning king and the appropriate place for him to die.[139]

The Buddha then asked all the attendant Bhikkhus to clarify any doubts or questions they had and cleared them all in a way which others could not do. They had none. According to Buddhist scriptures, he then finally entered *parinirvana*. The Buddha's final words are reported to have been: "All composite things (Saṅkhāra) are perishable. Strive for your own liberation with diligence" (Pali: 'vayadhammā saṅkhārā appamādena sampādethā'). His body was cremated and the relics were placed in monuments or stupas, some of which are believed to have survived until the present. For example, the Temple of the Tooth or "Dalada Maligawa" in Sri Lanka is the place where what some believe to be the relic of the right tooth of Buddha is kept at present.

Life scenes of Buddha, sandstone: Birth, Enlightenment, Descent from Heaven, First Sermon, Passing Away, c. 2nd century CE, Government Museum, Mathura.

According to the Pāli historical chronicles of Sri Lanka, the *Dīpavamsa* and *Mahāvamsa*, the coronation of Emperor Aśoka (Pāli: Asoka) is 218 years after the death of the Buddha. According

to two textual records in Chinese (十八部論 and 部執異論), the coronation of Emperor Aśoka is 116 years after the death of the Buddha. Therefore, the time of Buddha's passing is either 486 BCE according to Theravāda record or 383 BCE according to Mahayana record. However, the actual date traditionally accepted as the date of the Buddha's death in Theravāda countries is 544 or 545 BCE, because the reign of Emperor Aśoka was traditionally reckoned to be about 60 years earlier than current estimates. In Burmese Buddhist tradition, the date of the Buddha's death is 13 May 544 BCE.[140] whereas in Thai tradition it is 11 March 545 BCE.[141]

At his death, the Buddha is famously believed to have told his disciples to follow no leader. Mahakasyapa was chosen by the sangha to be the chairman of the First Buddhist Council, with the two chief disciples Maudgalyayana and Sariputta having died before the Buddha.

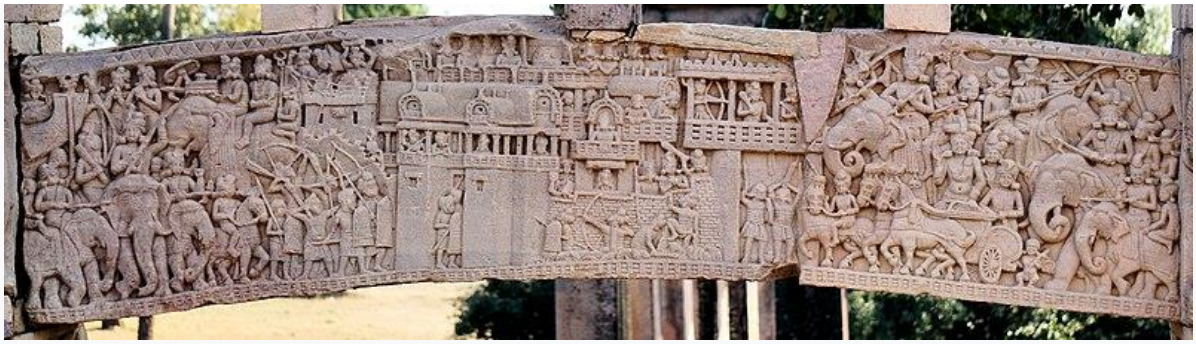
Hair Relics of Buddha on display at Gangaramaya Temple (Colombo).

While in the Buddha's days he was addressed by the very respected titles Buddha, Shākyamuni, Shākyasimha, Bhante and Bho, he was known after his *parinirvana nirvana* as *Arihant*, *Bhagavā/Bhagavat/Bhagwān*, *Mahāvira*,[142] *Jina/Jinendra*, *Sās tr*, *Sugata*, and most popularly in scriptures as *Tathāgata*.

Relics

See also: Śarīra and Relics associated with Buddha

After his death, Buddha's cremation relics were divided amongst 8 royal families and his disciples; centuries later they would be enshrined by King Ashoka into 84,000 stupas.[143][144] Many supernatural legends surround the history of alleged relics as they accompanied the spread of Buddhism and gave legitimacy to rulers.



War over the Buddha's Relics held by the city of Kushinagar, South Gate, Stupa no. 1, Sanchi.[145]

Physical characteristics

Main article: Physical characteristics of the Buddha

Standing Buddha in red sandstone, Mathura, Gupta art, circa 5th century CE. Mathura Museum.[146]

An extensive and colourful physical description of the Buddha has been laid down in scriptures. A kshatriya by birth, he had military training in his upbringing, and by Shakyan tradition was required to pass tests to demonstrate his worthiness as a warrior in order to marry.[citation needed] He had a strong enough body to be noticed by one of the kings and was asked to join his army as a general.[citation needed] He is also believed by Buddhists to have "the 32 Signs of the Great Man".

The Brahmin Sonadanda described him as "handsome, good-looking, and pleasing to the eye, with a most beautiful complexion. He has a godlike form and countenance, he is by no means unattractive." (D, I:115)

"It is wonderful, truly marvellous, how serene is the good Gotama's appearance, how clear and radiant his complexion, just as the golden jujube in autumn is clear and radiant, just as a palm-tree fruit just loosened from the stalk is clear and radiant, just as an adornment of red gold wrought in a crucible by a skilled goldsmith, deftly beaten and laid on a yellow-cloth shines, blazes and glitters, even so, the good Gotama's senses are calmed, his complexion is clear and radiant." (A, I:181)

A disciple named Vakkali, who later became an arahant, was so obsessed by the Buddha's physical presence that the Buddha is said to have felt impelled to tell him to desist, and to have reminded him that he should know the Buddha through the Dhamma and not through physical appearances.

Although there are no extant representations of the Buddha in human form until around the 1st century CE (see Buddhist art), descriptions of the physical characteristics of fully enlightened buddhas are attributed to the Buddha in the Digha Nikaya's *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* (D, I:142).[147] In addition, the Buddha's physical appearance is described by Yasodhara to their son Rahula upon the Buddha's first post-Enlightenment return to his former princely palace in the non-canonical Pali devotional hymn, *Narasīha Gāthā* ("The Lion of Men").[148]

Among the 32 main characteristics it is mentioned that Buddha has blue eyes.[149]

Nine virtues

Recollection of nine virtues attributed to the Buddha is a common Buddhist meditation and devotional practice called Buddhānusmrti. The nine virtues are also among the 40 Buddhist meditation subjects. The nine virtues of the Buddha appear throughout the Tipitaka,[150] and include:

Buddho – Awakened

Sammasambuddho – Perfectly self-awakened

Vijja-carana-sampano – Endowed with higher knowledge and ideal conduct.

Sugato – Well-gone or Well-spoken.

Lokavidu – Wise in the knowledge of the many worlds.

Anuttaro Purisa-damma-sarathi – Unexcelled trainer of untrained people.

Satthadeva-Manussanam – Teacher of gods and humans.

Bhagavathi – The Blessed one

Araham – Worthy of homage. An Arahant is "one with taints destroyed, who has lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached the true goal, destroyed the fetters of being, and is completely liberated through final knowledge."

Teachings

Lord Buddha at Pandavleni Caves, Nashik.

Main article: Buddhist philosophy

Use of Brahmanical motifs

In the Pali Canon, the Buddha uses many Brahmanical devices. For example, in Samyutta Nikaya 111, Majjhima Nikaya 92 and Vinaya i 246 of the Pali Canon, the Buddha praises the Agnihotra as the foremost sacrifice and the Gayatri mantra as the foremost meter:

aggihuttamukhā yaññā sāvittī chandaso mukham.

Sacrifices have the Agnihotra as foremost; of meter, the foremost is the Sāvitrī.[151]

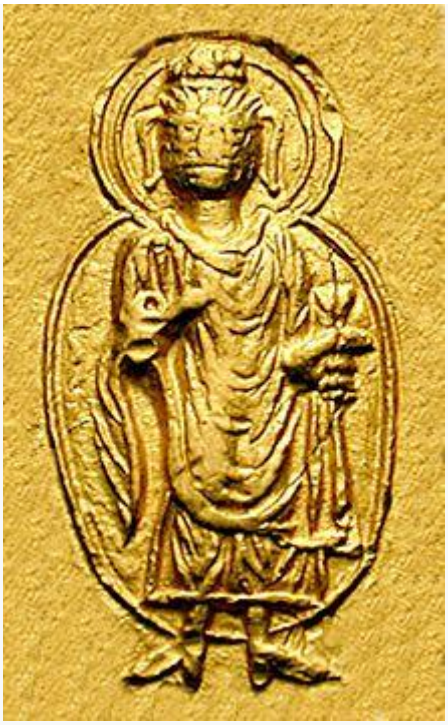
Tracing the oldest teachings

One method to obtain information on the oldest core of Buddhism is to compare the oldest versions of the Pali Canon and other texts, such as the surviving portions of Sarvastivada, Mulasarvastivada, Mahisasaka, Dharmaguptaka,[152][153] and the Chinese Agamas.[*citation needed*] The reliability of these sources, and the possibility of drawing out a core of oldest teachings, is a matter of dispute.[154][155][156][157] According to Vetter, inconsistencies remain, and other methods must be applied to resolve those inconsistencies.[152][note 16]

According to Schmithausen, there are three positions held by scholars of Buddhism:[160]

1. "Stress on the fundamental homogeneity and substantial authenticity of at least a considerable part of the Nikayic materials."[note 17]
2. "Scepticism with regard to the possibility of retrieving the doctrine of earliest Buddhism."[note 18][note 19]
3. "Cautious optimism in this respect."[note 20]

Dhyana and insight



The Buddha on a coin of Kanishka I, c. 130 CE.

A core problem in the study of early Buddhism is the relation between *dhyana* and insight.[155][154][157] Schmithausen notes that the mention of the four noble truths as constituting

"liberating insight", which is attained after mastering the Rupa Jhanas, is a later addition to texts such as Majjhima Nikaya 36.[158][154][155]

Earliest Buddhism

Main article: Presectarian Buddhism

According to Tilmann Vetter, the core of earliest Buddhism is the practice of *dhyāna*,[165] as a workable alternative to painful ascetic practices.[166][note 21] Bronkhorst agrees that *Dhyāna* was a Buddhist invention,[154][*page needed*] whereas Norman notes that "the Buddha's way to release [...] was by means of meditative practices."[168] Discriminating insight into transiency as a separate path to liberation was a later development.[169][170]

According to the Mahāsaccakasutta,[note 22] from the fourth *jhana* the Buddha gained *bodhi*. Yet, it is not clear what he was awakened to.[168][154][*page needed*] According to Schmithausen and Bronkhorst, "liberating insight" is a later addition to this text, and reflects a later development and understanding in early Buddhism.[158][154][*page needed*] The mentioning of the four truths as constituting "liberating insight" introduces a logical problem, since the four truths depict a linear path of practice, the knowledge of which is in itself not depicted as being liberating:[171]

> [T]hey do not teach that one is released by knowing the four noble truths, but by practicing the fourth noble truth, the eightfold path, which culminates in right samadhi.[171]

Although *"Nibbāna"* (Sanskrit: *Nirvāna*) is the common term for the desired goal of this practice, many other terms can be found throughout the Nikayas, which are not specified.[172][note 23]

According to Vetter, the description of the Buddhist path may initially have been as simple as the term "the middle way". In time, this short description was elaborated, resulting in the description of the eightfold path.[173]

According to both Bronkhorst and Anderson, the four truths became a substitution for prajna, or "liberating insight", in the suttas[131][127][*page needed*] in those texts where "liberating insight" was preceded by the four jhanas.[174] According to Bronkhorst, the four truths may not have been formulated in earliest Buddhism, and did not serve in earliest Buddhism as a description of "liberating insight".[175] Gotama's teachings may have been personal, "adjusted to the need of each person."[174]

The *three marks of existence*[note 24] may reflect Upanishadic or other influences. K.R. Norman supposes that these terms were already in use at the Buddha's time, and were familiar to his listeners.[176]

The Brahma-vihara was in origin probably a brahmanic term;[177] but its usage may have been common to the Sramana traditions.[154]

Later developments

In time, "liberating insight" became an essential feature of the Buddhist tradition. The following teachings, which are commonly seen as essential to Buddhism, are later formulations which form part of the explanatory framework of this "liberating insight":[155][154]

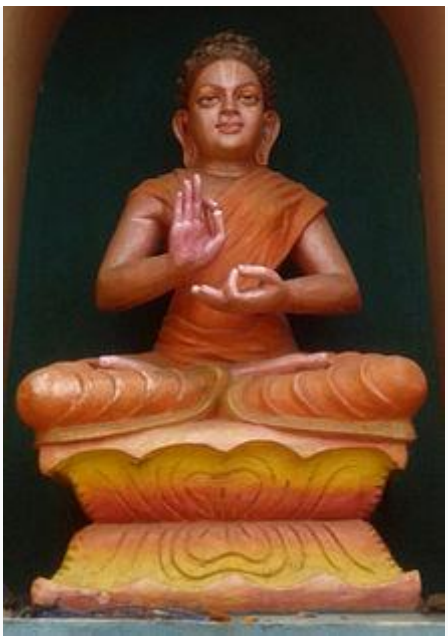
The Four Noble Truths: that suffering is an ingrained part of existence; that the origin of suffering is craving for sensuality, acquisition of identity, and fear of annihilation; that suffering can be ended; and that following the Noble Eightfold Path is the means to accomplish this;

The Noble Eightfold Path: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration;

Dependent origination: the mind creates suffering as a natural product of a complex process.

Other religions

Buddha depicted as the 9th avatar of god Vishnu in a traditional Hindu representation



Buddha as an avatar at Dwaraka Tirumala temple, Andhra Pradesh.

Main article: Gautama Buddha in world religions

Some Hindus regard Gautama as the 9th avatar of Vishnu.[note 12][178] However, Buddha's teachings deny the authority of the Vedas and the concepts of Brahman-Atman.[179][180][181] Consequently Buddhism is generally classified as a ***nāstika*** school (heterodox, literally "It is not so"[note 25]) in contrast to the six orthodox schools of Hinduism.[184][185][186]In Sikhism, Buddha is mentioned as the 23rd avatar of Vishnu in the Chaubis Avtar, a composition in Dasam Granth traditionally and historically attributed to Guru Gobind Singh.[187]

Classical Sunni scholar Tabari reports that Buddhist idols were brought from Afghanistan to Baghdad in the ninth century. Such idols had been sold in Buddhist temples next to a mosque in Bukhara, but he does not further discuss the role of Buddha. According to the works on Buddhism by Al-Biruni (973–after 1050), views regarding the exact identity of Buddha was diverse. Accordingly some regarded him as the divine incarnate, others as an apostle of the angels or as an Ifrit and others as an apostle of God sent to human race. By 12th century, al-Shahrastani even compared Buddha to Khidr, described as an ideal human. Ibn Nadim, who was also familiar with Manichean teachings, even identifies Buddha as a prophet, who taught a religion to "banish Satan", although not mention it explicitly. However, most Classical scholars described Buddha in theistic terms, that is apart from Islamic teachings.[188]

Nevertheless the Buddha is regarded as a prophet by the minority Ahmadiyya[189] sect, generally considered deviant and rejected as apostate by mainstream Islam.[190][191] Some early Chinese Taoist-Buddhists thought the Buddha to be a reincarnation of Laozi.[192]

Disciples of the Cao Đài religion worship the Buddha as a major religious teacher.[193] His image can be found in both their Holy See and on the home altar. He is revealed during communication with Divine Beings as son of their Supreme Being (God the Father) together with other major religious teachers and founders like Jesus, Laozi, and Confucius.[194]

The Christian Saint Josaphat is based on the Buddha. The name comes from the Sanskrit *Bodhisattva* via Arabic *Būdhasaf* and Georgian *Iodasaph*.[195] The only story in which St. Josaphat appears, *Barlaam and Josaphat*, is based on the life of the Buddha.[196] Josaphat was included in earlier editions of the Roman Martyrology (feast day 27 November)—though not in the Roman Missal—and in the Eastern Orthodox Church liturgical calendar (26 August).

In the ancient Gnostic sect of Manichaeism, the Buddha is listed among the prophets who preached the word of God before Mani.[197]

In the Bahá'í Faith, Buddha is regarded as one of the Manifestations of God.

Depiction in arts and media

Films

Main article: Depictions of Gautama Buddha in film

Little Buddha, a 1994 film by Bernardo Bertolucci

Prem Sanyas, a 1925 silent film, directed by Franz Osten and Himansu Rai

Television

Buddha, a 2013 mythological drama on Zee TV

The Buddha 2010 PBS documentary by award-winning filmmaker David Grubin and narrated by Richard Gere

Literature

The Light of Asia, an 1879 epic poem by Edwin Arnold

Buddha, a manga series that ran from 1972 to 1983 by Osamu Tezuka

Siddhartha novel by Hermann Hesse, written in German in 1922

Lord of Light, a novel by Roger Zelazny depicts a man in a far future Earth Colony who takes on the name and teachings of the Buddha

Creation, a 1981 novel by Gore Vidal, includes the Buddha as one of the religious figures that the main character encounters

Music

Karuna Nadee, a 2010 oratorio by Dinesh Subasinghe

The Light of Asia, an 1886 oratorio by Dudley Buck

Painting

Shussan Shaka, a Zen painting motif

A panorama of scenes from the Buddha's life, from a Burmese *parabaik* or picture book.

See also

List of founders of religious traditions

Notes

1 ^ Jump up to:[a] [b] [c] Adherents of Theravada Buddhism, especially India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. cf Sixth Buddhist Council, take these dates to be 624 – 544 BCE; in Thailand it is 623 – 543 BCE. Besides monastic acceptance of these dates, the above mentioned governments also accept these dates as shown by their issuance of commemorative stamps for the 2500 Jayanthi of Buddha's Parinibbana in 1956 and subsequent commemorative issuances for later Jayanthi celebrations.

2 ^ Jump up to:[a] [b] [c] [d] [e] According to the Buddhist tradition, following the *Nidanakatha*,[35] the introductory to the Jataka tales, the stories of the former lives of the Buddha, Gautama was born in Lumbini, present-day Nepal.[36][37] In the mid-3rd century BCE the Emperor Ashoka determined that Lumbini was Gautama's birthplace and thus installed a pillar there with the inscription: "...this is where the Buddha, sage of the Śākyas (*Śākyamuni*), was born."[38]

Based on stone inscriptions, there is also speculation that Lumbei, Kapileswar village, Odisha, at the east coast of India, was the site of ancient Lumbini.[39][40][41] Hartmann discusses the hypothesis and states, "The inscription has generally been considered spurious (...)"[42] He quotes Sircar: "There can hardly be any doubt that the people responsible for the Kapilesvara inscription copied it from the said facsimile not much earlier than 1928."

Kapilavastu was the place where he grew up:[43][note 9]

Warder: "The Buddha [...] was born in the Sakya Republic, which was the city state of Kapilavastu, a very small state just inside the modern state boundary of Nepal against the Northern Indian frontier.[8]

Walshe: "He belonged to the Sakya clan dwelling on the edge of the Himalayas, his actual birthplace being a few miles north of the present-day Northern Indian border, in Nepal. His father was, in fact, an elected chief of the clan rather than the king he was later made out to be, though his title was *raja*—a term which only partly corresponds to our word 'king'. Some of the states of North India at that time were kingdoms and others republics, and the Sakyan republic was subject to the powerful king of neighbouring Kosala, which lay to the south".[45]

The exact location of ancient Kapilavastu is unknown.[43] It may have been either Piprahwa in Uttar Pradesh, northern India,[46][47][48] or Tilaurakot,[49] present-day Nepal.[50][43] The two cities are located only fifteen miles from each other.[50]

See also Conception and birth and Birthplace Sources

3 ^ According to Mahaparinibbana Sutta,[3] Gautama died in Kushinagar, which is located in present-day Uttar Pradesh, India.

4 ^ /sɪˈdɑːrtə, -θə/; Sanskrit: [sɪddʰaːɽtʰɐ gautɐmɐ]; Gautama namely Gotama in Pali
5 ^ /ˈgɔːtəmə, ˈgaʊ- ˈbuːdə, ˈbʊdə/
6 ^ Sanskrit: [ɕaːkjɐmʊnɪ bʊddʰɐ]
7 ^ Jump up to:[a] [b]

411–400: Dundas 2002, p. 24: "...as is now almost universally accepted by informed Indological scholarship, a re-examination of early Buddhist historical material, [...], necessitates a redating of the Buddha's death to between 411 and 400 BCE..."

405: Richard Gombrich[24][22][25][26]

Around 400: See the consensus in the essays by leading scholars in *Narain, Awadh Kishore, ed. (2003). The Date of the Historical Śākyamuni Buddha. New Delhi: BR Publishing. ISBN 8176463531.*.

According to Pali scholar K. R. Norman, a life span for the Buddha of c. 480 to 400 BCE (and his teaching period roughly from c. 445 to 400 BCE) "fits the archaeological evidence better".[27] See also Notes on the Dates of the Buddha Íåkyamuni.

8 ^ In 2013, archaeologist Robert Coningham found the remains of a *Bodhigara*, a tree shrine, dated to 550 BCE at the Maya Devi Temple, Lumbini, speculating that it may possibly be a Buddhist shrine. If so, this may push back the Buddha's birth date.[30] Archaeologists caution that the shrine may represent pre-Buddhist tree worship, and that further research is needed.[30]
Richard Gombrich has dismissed Coningham's speculations as "a fantasy", noting that Coningham lacks the necessary expertise on the history of early Buddhism.[31]
Geoffrey Samuel notes that several locations of both early Buddhism and Jainism are closely related to Yaksha-worship, that several Yakshas were "converted" to Buddhism, a well-known example being Vajrapani,[32] and that several Yaksha-shrines, where trees were worshipped, were converted into Buddhist holy places.[33]
9 ^ Some sources mention Kapilavastu as the birthplace of the Buddha. Gethin states: "The earliest Buddhist sources state that the future Buddha was born Siddhārtha Gautama (Pali Siddhattha Gotama), the son of a local chieftain—a *rājan*—in Kapilavastu (Pali Kapilavatthu) what is now the Indian–Nepalese border."[44] Gethin does not give references for this statement.
10 ^ According to Alexander Berzin, "Buddhism developed as a shramana school that accepted rebirth under the force of karma, while rejecting the existence of the type of soul that other schools asserted. In addition, the Buddha accepted as parts of the path to liberation the use of logic and reasoning, as well as ethical behavior, but not to the degree of Jain asceticism. In this way, Buddhism avoided the extremes of the previous four shramana schools."[55]
11 ^ Minor Rock Edict Nb3: "These Dhamma texts – Extracts from the Discipline, the Noble Way of Life, the Fears to Come, the Poem on the Silent Sage, the Discourse on the Pure Life, Upatisa's Questions, and the Advice to Rahula which was spoken by the Buddha concerning false speech – these Dhamma texts, reverend sirs, I desire that all the monks and nuns may constantly listen to and remember. Likewise the laymen and laywomen."[63]

Dhammika:"There is disagreement amongst scholars concerning which Pali suttas correspond to some of the text. Vinaya samukose: probably the Atthavasa Vagga, Anguttara Nikaya, 1:98–100. Aliya vasani: either the Ariyavasa Sutta, Anguttara Nikaya, V:29, or the Ariyavamsa Sutta, Anguttara Nikaya, II: 27–28. Anagata bhayani: probably the Anagata Sutta, Anguttara Nikaya, III:100. Muni gatha: Muni Sutta, Sutta Nipata 207–21. Upatisa pasine: Sariputta Sutta, Sutta Nipata 955–75. Laghulavade: Rahulavada Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya, I:421."[63]
12 ^ Jump up to:[a] [b] *Kumar Singh, Nagendra (1997). "Buddha as depicted in the Purāṇas". Encyclopaedia of Hinduism. **7**. Anmol Publications. pp. 260–75. ISBN 978-81-7488-168-7. Retrieved 16 April 2012.*
13 ^ According to Geoffrey Samuel, the Buddha was born as a Kshatriya,[93] in a moderate Vedic culture at the central Ganges Plain area, where the shramana-traditions developed. This area had a moderate Vedic culture, where the Kshatriyas were the highest varna, in contrast to the Brahmanic ideology of Kuru–Panchala, where the Brahmins had become the highest varna.[93] Both the Vedic culture and the shramana tradition contributed to the emergence of the so-called "Hindu-synthesis" around the start of the Common Era.[94][93]

^ Scholars have noted inconsistencies in the presentations of the Buddha's enlightenment, and the Buddhist path to liberation, in the oldest sutras. These inconsistencies show that the Buddhist teachings evolved, either during the lifetime of the Buddha, or thereafter. See:
* Andre Bareau (1963), *Recherches sur la biographie du Buddha dans les Sutrapitaka et les Vinayapitaka anciens*, Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient
* Schmithausen, *On some Aspects of Descriptions or Theories of 'Liberating Insight' and 'Enlightenment' in Early Buddhism*
* K.R. Norman, Four Noble Truths
* Tilman Vetter, *The Ideas and Meditative Practices of Early Buddhism*
* *Richard F. Gombrich (2006). "4". How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of the Early Teachings. Routledge. ISBN 978-1-134-19639-5.*
* *Bronkhorst, Johannes (1993), "7", The Two Traditions Of Meditation In Ancient India, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers*
* *Anderson, Carol (1999), Pain and Its Ending: The Four Noble Truths in the Theravada Buddhist Canon, Routledge*

14 ^ Waley notes: *suukara-kanda*, "pig-bulb"; *suukara-paadika*, "pig's foot" and*sukaresh.ta* "sought-out by pigs". He cites Neumann's suggestion that if a plant called "sought-out by pigs" exists then *suukaramaddava* can mean "pig's delight".

15 ^ Exemplary studies are the study on descriptions of "liberating insight" by Lambert Schmithausen,[158] the overview of early Buddhism by Tilmann Vetter,[155] the philological work on the four truths by K.R. Norman,[159] the textual studies by Richard Gombrich,[157] and the research on early meditation methods by Johannes Bronkhorst.[154]

16 ^ Two well-known proponent of this position are A.K. Warder and Richard Gombrich.
* According to A.K. Warder, in his 1970 publication "Indian Buddhism},"from the oldest extant texts a common kernel can be drawn out.[161] According to Warder, c.q. his publisher: "This kernel of doctrine is presumably common Buddhism of the period before the great schisms of the fourth and third centuries BC. It may be substantially the Buddhism of the Buddha himself, although this cannot be proved: at any rate it is a Buddhism presupposed by the schools as existing about a hundred years after the *parinirvana* of the Buddha, and there is no evidence to suggest that it was formulated by anyone else than the Buddha and his immediate followers".[161]
* Richard Gombrich: "I have the greatest difficulty in accepting that the main edifice is not the work of a single genius. By "the main edifice" I mean the collections of the main body of sermons, the four Nikāyas, and of the main body of monastic rules."[157]

17 ^ A proponent of the second position is Ronald Davidson.

18 ^ Ronald Davidson: "While most scholars agree that there was a rough body of sacred literature (disputed)(sic) that a relatively early community (disputed)(sic) maintained and transmitted, we have little confidence that much, if any, of surviving Buddhist scripture is actually the word of the historical Buddha."[162]

19 ^ Well-known proponents of the third position are:
* J.W. de Jong: "It would be hypocritical to assert that nothing can be said about the doctrine of earliest Buddhism [...] the basic ideas of Buddhism found in the canonical writings could very well have been proclaimed by him [the Buddha], transmitted and developed by his disciples and, finally, codified in fixed formulas."[163]
* Johannes Bronkhorst: "This position is to be preferred to (ii) for purely methodological reasons: only those who seek may find, even if no success is guaranteed."[160]
* Donald Lopez: "The original teachings of the historical Buddha are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to recover or reconstruct."[164]

20 ^ Vetter: "However, if we look at the last, and in my opinion the most important, component of this list [the noble eightfold path], we are still dealing with what according to me is the real content of the middle way, dhyana-meditation, at least the stages two to four, which are said to be free of contemplation and reflection. Everything preceding the eighth part, i.e. right samadhi, apparently has the function of preparing for the right samadhi."[167]

21 ^ Majjhima Nikaya 36

22 ^ Vetter: "I am especially thinking here of MN 26 (I p.163,32; 165,15;166,35) *kimkusalagavesi anuttaram santivarapadam pariyesamano* (searching for that which is beneficial, seeking the unsurpassable, best place of peace) and again MN 26 (passim), *anuttaramyagakkhemam nibbiinam pariyesati*(he seeks the unsurpassable safe place, the *nirvana*). *Anuppatta-sadattho*(one who has reached the right goal) is also a vague positive expression in the Arhatformula in MN 35 (I p, 235), see chapter 2, footnote 3, Furthermore, *satthi* (welfare) is important in e.g. SN 2.12 or 2.17 or Sn 269;

and *sukha* and *rati* (happiness), in contrast to other places, as used in Sn 439 and 956. The oldest term was perhaps *amata* (immortal, immortality) [...] but one could say here that it is a negative term."[172]

23 ^ Understanding of these marks helps in the development of detachment:

Anicca (Sanskrit: *anitya*): That all things that come to have an end;

Dukkha (Sanskrit: *duḥkha*): That nothing which comes to be is ultimately satisfying;

Anattā (Sanskrit: *anātman*): That nothing in the realm of experience can really be said to be "I" or "mine".
^ "in Sanskrit philosophical literature, 'āstika' means 'one who believes in the authority of the Vedas', 'soul', 'Brahman'. ('nāstika' means the opposite of these).[182][183]